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TO OUR READERS

I hereby regret to inform our esteem readers that our editor Prof. Surjit Singh Chawla expired on 22.11.2000. Mr. Chawla was a very devoted and honest worker, he was doing the editorial work of Guru Nanak Foundation on honorary basis and was putting his best in the job. We shall miss him very badly and this irreparable loss cannot be made up and the void created by his absence cannot be filled up. Guru Nanak Foundation will try its best to continue the issue of the Journal with the help of our worthy readers and scholars, till such time as another editor is appointed.

(Satnam Singh)

Hony. General Secretary

1.12.2000

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Editorial

THE SECULAR DIMENSIONS OF THE SIKH TRADITION

The Sikh spiritual tradition has a deep secular orientation in the sense that right from the beginning the sikh Gurus displayed a genuine regard and respect for other systems of religious thought - Their attitude was definitely positive. But they did not give up their right to condemn and criticise human attitudes sanctified by fossilised thought patterns and social malpractices and actively fought for protecting the people against political tyranny of fanatic rulers of the times.

Despite the fact that the Gurus were themselves the victims of the theocratic muslim state and took cudgels on behalf of the non-Muslims who faced a real threat of religious, political and cultural obliteration they did not develop anti-Muslim, anti Islamic attitudes and remained secular (specially in the sense in which we interpret it in the modern India). Of course there is a vital difference. In the modern India, advocacy of secularism is, in most cases, a pragmatic political strategy in the game of power. with the Gurus, real respect for different religions was a deep rooted conviction.

Bhai Mardana who a low-caste Muslim musician was Guru Nanak's constant companion. On his missionary tours he would meet and talk to Muslim divines - Mian Mir the Sufi saint laid the foundation of Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar and pleaded with the Mughal emperors to have a positive attitudes towards the sikh Gurus. Guru Arjun, while compiling the Guru Granth Sahib, the most sacred scripture of the sikhs, included the verses of Sheikh Baba

Farid. It was not done to appease the Muslim sentiment. Had it been so the Mughal emperor Jahangir would not have ordered that the Guru be tortured to death. There would place any confrontation between the Mughal minions and Guru Har Gobind. Guru Har Rai would have not banished Ram Rai, Guru Tegh Bahadur would not have been martyred and Guru Gobind Singh would have not persistently and uncompromisingly fought against Aurangzeb.

Of course, the Sikh tradition has deep roots in the Indian religious tradition. Despite its acceptance of Islamic influences and its condemnation of Brahminical practices and perception, the sikh system is rooted in the Indian soil. But the Gurus never adopted sectarian attitudes.

During the period after the fall of the Sikh state founded by Banda Bahadur and the re-emergence of the Sikh political power and the worst possible persecution of the Sikhs by the Muslim state which actively mobilised the Muslim populace in exterminating the Sikhs. But when the Sikhs came into power they did not indulge in the victimisation of their tormentors. They did not even humiliate the Muslim populace. The memories of the attempt of the state at genocide of the Sikhs were still fresh in the Sikh memory. And yet the Muslims were given a place of honour in the Sikh Darbar under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and enjoyed full freedom of religious faith and practice.

This could be achieved because the Sikh secular attitude was the outcome of an ideal nurtured by the Gurus for almost 250 years.

— Surjit Singh Chawla

THK BUDDA BUDDHIST AND SIKH PERSPECTIVE

The Parable of Crossing, Bhavasagrra

— HARCHARAN SINGH SOBTI

INTRODUCTION

The world and/or Cosmos, in various Indian religious traditions, is frequently referred to as **samsara**, akin to **sagara** (also **bhavajala**), further characterising it as **bhavasagara** or Ocean of Existence. The term **Samsara** means : a Course (**Sar**) returning (**Sam**) to its starting point.⁽¹⁾ In other words, **Samsara** stands for cyclic change, and, whatever is in constant change is identified as **samsara**. Since, **sagara** or Ocean is in constant change or flux, therefore, both **bhavasagara** and **samsara** are aptly referred to as interchangeable. One can cross over **bhavasagara** using marine vehicles variously called by medieval Indian Saints and **bhaktas**, such as, **nava**, **beri**, **jahaz**, **fulehra**, **bera** and **bohitha** etc. etc. These Vibrant beings have shared their spiritual experiences, also, in terms of crossing over the Ocean-Ocean of existence. This tradition continued during the medieval period at the time of composing/transcribing/editing of **Gurbani**, now enshrined in **The Adi Granth**, scripture of the Sikhs⁽²⁾. Again, this mode of expression is rooted in the Buddhist tradition that flourished during much earlier times than the advent of Bhakti cult of Alwar saints in Soith, sometimes, in the fourth century. A.D. However, I shall confine myself, in this paper, to deliberate upon the chosen parable in the perspective of both the Buddhist and the Sikh tradition, of course, touching upon not uncalled for allied issues.

2

It is the **Bodhisatta** Ideal that is invariably invoked while deliberating upon the above started predicament of crossing over **bhavasagara** by man, woman and gods. The said ideal is very much rooted in early Buddhism, based on Pali Canon. The Buddha, when in one of his previous existence, known as Brahmana, Sumedha, had resolved to gain **Samabodhi** and thus become Buddha, also committed as :

"Or why should I, a valorous man,
The Ocean seek to cross alone?
Omniscience first will I achieve,

And men and gods convey across.

"Since now I make this earnest wish,
In presence of this Best of men [Dipamkara]
Omniscience sometime I' achieve,

And multitudes convey across.

"I'll rebirth's circling stream arrest,
Destroy existence's three modes,
I'll climb the side's of Doctrine's ship,
And men and gods convey across"⁽³⁾

The said commitment fairly reflects the **Bodhisatta** belief that promotes Compassion to help the multitudes to board the Doctrine's ship and cross over **bhavasagara**. And, the Buddha honoured his commitment. There is an episode in **Mahaparanibbana Sutta** of the **Digha Nikaya**, to this effect. How, Gotama has become Buddha. **Mara** approaches Gotama the Buddha, (the later tells Anand), who addresses him, thus :

"Pass away now, lord, from existence. Let the exalted one now die! Now is the time for the Exalted One to pass away!" ⁽⁴⁾

The Buddha retaliated and told **Mara**, that

"I shall not die untill this pure religion of mine shall have become successful, prosperous, wide-spread, and popular in all its full extent-until, in a word, it shall have been well proclaimed among men!"⁽⁵⁾

The Buddha, besides honouring his committment, not only himself undertook **Carikas** for forty yesas and delivered discourses on **Dhamma** to help **Bhikkhus**, **Bhikkhunis** and the lay-disciples of either Sex to establish themselves in the Path **discovered** by him, but also apprised the **Bhikkhus** and **Bhikkhunis**, saying :

"I am delivered, O **Bhikkhus**, from all fetters, human and divine. You, O **Bhikkhus** are also delivered from all fetters, human and divine."⁽⁶⁾

In the same breath the Buddha instructed them, thus"

"Go ye now, O **Bhikkhus** and wander for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of Compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, and for the welfare of gods and men."⁽⁷⁾

The **Bodhisattva** Ideal, undoubtedly, is well, established in early Buddhism, but it developed in later Buddhism also called Mahayana, by way of protest against **Arahata Ideal**, **believed to be dear to theris** and theris belonging to **Theravadri** Buddhist tradition. An **Arahata**, as alleged by Mahayainists, is utterly selfish because he/she is concerned only with his/her personal **Nibbana** (Skt. Nirvana). The metaphorical connotation of the term Hinayana (Inferior vehicle) coined by the Mahayanists and attributed to the said **theris** and **theris**, apart from other things, too suggests a single-person boat or ferry. "The coldness

and aloofness of the **grahatas**", writes Hardy in his book, **The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature** (1932). "led to a movement in favour of the old gospel of 'saving all creatures.'".⁽⁷⁾ It is further stated that,

"The **Bodhisattva** Doctrine was promulgated also as a protest against this theory of **arahataship** which was regarded as doubly defective. It disregarded the higher duty of acquiring the perfect wisdom of a Buddha and it deprived the world of the services of holymen and women who had attained **nirvana** and passed away".⁽⁸⁾

It is 'against this background of a saintly and serene, but inactive and indolent monistic order' that the **Bodhisattva** takes the vow that—

"I shall not enter in to final **nirvana** before all beings have seen liberated." ⁽⁹⁾

Again —

"I must lead all beings to liberation, I will stay here till the end, even for the sake of one soul [Sic.]"⁽¹⁰⁾

The **BODHISATTVA** as conceived in later Buddhism, somehow, metaphorically speaking, makes use of Mahayana or great vehicle to help the multitudes of the pilgrims to cross over **BHAVASAGARA**. The **BODHISATTVA** takes a vow to see that All arrive at the other shore of **NIRVANA** before he (not she) enters into final **NIRVANA** or *un-upadisesa-nibbana*.

3

The vow of the **BODHISATTVA** called *pranidhana* in Sanskrit language is spelled out in *Asta-sahasraka Prajna-paramita* in these words :

"We having crossed (the stream of transmigratory

existence), may we help the living beings to cross! We being liberated, may we liberate others! We being comforted, may we comfort others! We being finally released, may we release others!" (12).

Amitabha Buddha, also in one of his previous births, when he was known as Bhikshu Dharmakara had undertaken similar vow. Gautama Buddha, as mentioned in *Sukhavativyuha Sutra* (Larger Discourse), scriptural text of the *Sukhavati-vyuha* or the Pureland Sect of Mahayana Buddhism, tells Ananda, that Bhikshu Dharmakara undertook 48 vows addressed to the Buddha Lokeshvara (13). The 18th vow, considered as 'King of the *Pranidhana*' is as follows :

"When I have obtained Buddhahood, if those beings who are in the ten quarters should believe in me with sincere thoughts, and should wish to be born in my country, and should have, say, ten times thought of me (or repeated my name), — if they should not be born there, may I not obtain the perfect knowledge, — barring only those beings who have committed the five deadly sins and who are spoken evil of the good Law" (14).

The said vow, in brief, means that Bhikshu Dharmakara after having obtained Buddhahood, will postpone his entering into final NIRVANA for the good of others, who are reasonable enough to seek entry into *SUKHAVATI-LOKA* to receive necessary training leading to *Nirvana*. Attaining *NIRVANA* through devotion, therefore, seems to culminate in Amitabha-bhakti.

4

The *SUKHAVATI-VYUHA* or the Pure land sect is named after *SUKHAVATI-LOKA*, the heavenly residence

of Amitabha Buddha. Few words about the canonical sources of this sect. The Canon comprises of three texts : i. *SUKHAVATI-VYUHA SUTRA* (Larger discourse), ii. *SUKHAVATI-VYUHA SUTRA* (Smaller discourse) and iii. *AMITYUR-DHYANA-SUTRA*. These sutras are believed to have been collected, as available in their present form, sometimes during the third or second century. B.C. An orator of these discourses is nonelse but Gautama the Buddha. The opening words of these discourses, identical to the practice followed in *Sutta Pitaka* of Dheravada, are '*evam maya 'Srutama*': thus I have heard. The original language of these canonical texts, as generally believed, is Sanskrit.

SUKHAVATI-VYUHA SUTRA (Larger Discourse). the basic scriptural text of *Sukhavati-vyuha* Sect. the Buddha delivered at Girdhara Kutta Hill, in Rajgiri. It commences with the dialogue between the Buddha and Ananda. Later on, the discourse is addressed to Ajita. Similarly, *SUKHAVATI-VYUHA SUTRA* (Smaller Discourse) the Buddha while addressing Sariputta, delivered at Anathapindaka's Gita Udhana, at Sravasti. Both these discourses only give detailed description of *SUKHAVATI-LOKS*, the abode of Amitabha Buddha. The detailed description with regard to the repetition of name of Amitabh Buddha i.e. *NAME-SADHANA* and the allied subjects, are available only *AMITAYUR-DHYANA-SUTRA*. It would not be possible to ascertain the spirit of the *NAMA-SADHANA* without looking in the set of circumstances under which the said discourse was delivered. What happened that the Prince Ajatasatru as instigated by Devadutta put his father Bimbisara in prison. and proclaimed that none was allowed to meet Bimbisara, the king. The queen-Consort Videhi loved the king as a devoted wife. She would regularly visit the king in prison and served him there. Day succeeded

day. One day the king right from the prison-house turned his face towards the Girdhar Kutta Hill, where the Buddha was staying, and prayed, "O, Bhagawan! kindly send Maha Muggalana, who is both my relative and friend, to shower his Compassion over me and give me instructions on *Atthasila* ⁽¹⁵⁾. Right at the moment when the prayer ended, Maha-Muggalana appeared and soon after gave instructions as desired by the king. The Buddha also sent his great disciple Puran Kashyap to the prison to teach him *Dharma*. Consequent upon learning about *Atthasila* and *Dharma*, the king experienced the bliss and his face became bright and radiant. One day, Ajatasatru enquired from the guard that if anybody had come to meet the king in prison? The guard told that the queen-consort was regularly coming. Besides, Maha Muggalana and Purana Kasyap frequently visited the king. It was not possible to check both of them. On hearing, about the visits of his mother Vidhehi, Ajatasatru got furious and lost his balance. He put his mother into the prison as she had helped the rebel. Now, Vidhi is in the prison-house cell in the palace. Vidhei prays to the Buddha, "Bhagavan! I am helpless, miserable, kindly send Maha Muggalana and Ananda to console me." ⁽¹⁶⁾. Thereafter, she wept bitterly. The Buddha, who was staying at Girdhar kutta Hill, sent both of them to Videhi. The Buddha, soon after, also arrived there. Vidhei prayed to the Buddha that may she be made familiar with all those places which are absolutely devoid of suffering so that she may be reborn there. The Buddha made her to visualize number of words so that she could choose her abode according to her choice. She expressed her desire to be reborn in *SUKHAVALI-LOKA*, the Abode of Amitabha Buddha. Vidhehi requested the Buddha to guide her so as to arrive at the desired abode. It was

in this perspective that the Buddha delivered the discourse, *AMITAYUR-DHYANA-SUTRA*, propounding the path of *Nama-Japa*. The Buddha catagorically stated that anyone repeating the *mantra*, *Namo' mitabha Buddhaya* would be liberated from one's sins. At the end, Ananda asked the Buddha as to what should be the name of the *Sutras*? The Buddha suggested several names and one of the names of the *Sutra* was *Kamavarana-Visudhi* which means 'The entire removal of the abstacles of the Karma', (this means) of being born in the realm of the Buddha."¹⁷ The *SUKHAVAATI-LOKA* in the instant case, In other words, this *Sutra* profounding the path of *Nama-Japa* helps the devotees to liberate themselves from sufferings. Recalling of Theravadini Buddhist tradition, way suggest some one to doubt as to this original contribution of Mahayana. There are at least two refereness in the *Digha Nikaya* that need to be looked into, One such reference is available in the *Mahaparinibana Sutra* of *Digha Hikaya*. The Buddha while addressing Ananda, stated that :

"It may be Ananda, that in some of you the thought may arise, the word of the master is ended, we have no teacher more ! But, it is not, thus, Ananda, that you should regard it. Truth and the Rules of the Order which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after I am gone, be the teacher to you" ¹⁸.

The commandment in the sikh tradition to adore Granth as Guru', I believe has certainly something to do with the Theravadhini Buddhist tradition. In spite of all that, the Buddha did not, in the Thervandini perspective refer to *Nama-Japa*, at all. The *panditas* of Theravada tradition may also refer to the following adoration which is repeated very much like *mantra* to

prove that, No! *Nama-Japa* has its roots in that very tradition—

*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Anahato
Samma-Sambuddhassa.*

Reference to the Blessed one, *Arahata* the *Samma-Sambuddha*. ⁽¹⁹⁾

The above reference is from the *Sakkapanha Sutta* (No. 21) of the *Digha Nikaya*. Here, the Buddha had satisfactorily answered same of the questions of Devendra Sakka (Pali:Sakka) and at the end of this meeting Devendra, while paying his tribute to the Buddha, had uttered these words. These words, in no way, can be upheld to serve as a base for *Nama-Japa* or *Nama-Simran*. Therefore, the cult of *Nama-Japa* when viewed in the Buddhist perspective must have originated with *Amitayut Dhayana-Sutra*. The Buddhannu — *Sruti* enshrined in *Pali Tipittaka* might be accepted as its seed. Moreover, in some quarters Mahayana too is considered to be by the developing stage of Theravada Buddhism.

5

In fact *Nama-Simran* as contemplated in *Sukhavati-vyuha* is nothing but devotion accorded to Amitabha Buddha, who is personification of *Sukhavati-loka*, inherently present within. One devoted to Amitabha Buddha while repeating '*Namo' mitabha buddhaya*' evokes his Compassion. In this way, the practice of devotion begins from the *Nama-Simran* of Amitabha Buddha, which in itself operates as a result of his *pranidhana* or vow. Through *Nama* the devotee desires to remain intune with Amitabha Buddha which is present within. This means that the total surrender of oneself to Amitabha Buddha is the foundation-stone

of Amitabha *bhakti*. Since the entire structure of *bhakti* lies upon the Compassion of the 'other' in the present case, upon Amitabha Buddha. In short, the door of *Sikhavati-loka* for Amitabha *bhakta* opens through his intuning with Amitabha while repeating his *Nama*. When every thing depends upon the 'Other' the dependence needs to be authentic in nature. This means that the devotee has to whole-heartedly accept himself /herself, ensuing full faith in the object of worship. One can not cross the *bhavasagara* without it. *Arahata* as conceived in Theravada Buddhism and already pointed out, sits in one-man boat to 'cross over the *bhavasagara*. Whereas, in Mahayana (Great Vehicle) this one-man boat takes the form of *bera*. ਆਪਿਜਪੁਰੁ ਆਪਹਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵਹੁ ਯ meditate oneself and help others like wise". (20) the *bera* stands to put this ideal into practice. The *bera* has to cross over the *bhavasagara* through the force derived from the *pranidhana* or vow of Amitabha Buddha. This ideal of *Nama-marga* may be easy to put into practice, but, it is handicapped by limitations of serious nature. The *mantra* chosen for repetition must consist of words and the words must belong to certain tradition, which in itself, therefore, can not be all inclusive. *Vipassana*, on the other hand, is altogether free from such limitations. (21).

6

The medieval Indian Saints, *bhaktas* and Sikh gurus, made use of parable of crossing over *bhavasagara* with the aid of marine vehicles, such as,

- * **Beri** : ਨਾਨਕ ਬੇੜੀ ਸੱਰ ਦੀ ਤਰੀਐ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ॥
The Boat of Truth carries across, says Nanak, by virtue of Word of guru. (22)
- * **Tula** : ਗੁਰਪਉੜੀ ਬੇੜਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਤੁਲਹਾ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਉ॥

Guru is the ladder, the boat, the raft, for imbibing Hari's Name. ⁽²³⁾

- * **Bera** : ਸਾਚੁ ਧਰਮ ਕਾ ਬੇੜਾ, ਬਾਧਿਆ ਭਵਜਲੁ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਵਾਈ॥
One crosses over the ocean of existence by the Boat of Eternal Law. ⁽²⁴⁾

- * **Jahaz** : ਨਿਰਭੈ ਹੋਇ ਨ ਹਰਿ ਭਜੇ ਮਨ ਬਉਰਾ ਗਹਿਉ ਨ ਰਾਮ ਜਹਾਜ਼॥
Why not be fearless and meditate upon the Lord and board the ship of God? ⁽²⁵⁾

- * **Bohitha** : ਭਵਸਾਗਰ ਬੋਹਿਥ ਹਰਿ ਚਰਣੁ
ਸਿਮਰਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਮਰਣ॥
God's feet are the boat to carry across the ocean of existence.
On contemplating upn God one does not born again. ⁽²⁶⁾

Let us sum up the substance of the use of marine vehicles, instrumental in crossing over *bhavasagara*, having religious connotations. Several marine vehicles referred above, such as, *beri*, *tulha*, *bera*, *jahaz* and *bohitha* used to cross over waters in literal sense, in short, stand for truth, (*Nanak beri Sacha Ki*), *Guru (Beri Guru Guru tulha)*, *Dharma (Sacha Dharma Ka bera)* and *Hari charana (bohitha Hari charana)* etc. etc. which are interchangeable and conceived in the background of devotional fervour. There are references to several failures the pilgrims, usually, come across, like :

- * ਕਬੀਰ ਬੇੜਾ ਜਰ ਜਰ ਫੂਟੇ ਛੇਨਿਕ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ॥
Our life's boat contains thousands of holes. ⁽²⁷⁾
- * ਬੇੜਾ ਬੰਧਿ ਨ ਸਕਿਓ ਬੰਧਨ ਦੀ ਵੇਲਾ
ਭਰਿ ਸਰਵਰੁ ਜਲ ਉਛਲੇ ਤਬ ਤਰਣੁ ਦੁਹੇਲਾ॥
I did not when I could build my boat
Now the sea-waves lash, how to swim across. ⁽²⁸⁾

etc. etc. but, the positive requirement underlined is, undoubtedly, an inevitability of the Grace and guidance of guru. While crossing over *bhavasagara*. Using Buddhist idiom we can name it an entire phenomenon as *Guru-yana*.

The spirit of *pranidhana* or vow of Bodhi *sattva* was carried forward in terms of ਬਿਰਦੁ by the Sikh Guru's and we quote as under :

- * ਮੇਰੇ ਗੁਣ ਅਵਗੁਣ ਨ ਬੀਚਾਰਿਆ।
ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਅਪਣਾ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਸਮਾਰਿਆ॥
The Lord overlooked my merits/demerits true to his vow ⁽²⁹⁾
- ਹਮਰੀ ਗਵਤ ਨ ਗਣੀਆ ਕਾਈ।
ਅਪਣਾ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਪਛਾਣਿ॥
My Lord took no account of my deeds
And He (proved) true to is vow ⁽³⁰⁾ (psra)

The Sikh Gurus constantly refer to the vow of ਬਿਰਦੁ undertaken by *Bodhisattva*, *Prabha* in new orientation. And, *Prabha*, overlooking the deeds of His devotees honours the vow and helps to cross over the *bhavasagara*.

In *Sukhavati-vyuha* or Pure land sect the repetition of the Name of Amitabha Buddha as '*Namo' mitabha-Buddhaya*' is believed to be an unfailing device to evoke the Grace of Amitabha Buddha. Similarly, the *Nama-Japa* or *Nama-Simrana* of Hari helps the devotee to cross over *bhavasagara* and we quote :

- * ਭਗਤਿ ਵਛਲੁ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਹੈ
ਹਰਿ ਲਾਜ ਰਖਾਇਆ॥
ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਰਣਾਗਤੀ
ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਤਰਾਇਆ॥
You are called the lover of devotees, save my honour.

Nanak has sought your asylum. Help me to cross over (the ocean of existence) ⁽³¹⁾

And, the Grace of *Hari* or *Prabha* is evoked through *Namajapa* and there are evidences of having achieved the goal. For instance :

* ਪਤਿਤ ਪਾਵਨ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਬੇਦਿ ਲੇਖਿਆ।
ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਸੇ ਨੈਨਹੁ ਪੇਖਿਆ॥

The *vedas* say to purify the sinners is the vow.
I have seen *Brahma* with my own eyes. ⁽³²⁾

ਚਮਤਕਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸੁ ਦਹਿ ਦਿਸਾ ਏਕੁ ਤਹ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਾਇਆ।

'ਨਾਨਕੁ ਪੈਅੰਪੈ ਚਰਣ ਜੰਪੈ ਭਗਤਿ

ਵਛਲ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਆਪਿ ਬਨਾਇਆ।

The illumined one is seen in all directions and none else.

Remember Him. He is the Lover of Devotees.

That is His vow. ⁽³³⁾

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude my paper giving a suggestion; addressed to those who are interested in the development of Sikh studies. I have touched upon some aspects of the *Namajapa* device as deliberated in the *Sukhayasti-vyuha*. It has been a practice, so dear to Sikh Scholars, and scholars of Sikh religion to analyse and evaluate the Path of *Nama-Japa* worked act in *Gurbani*, in the background of Bhakti movement. I am of the view that the study of *Nama-marga* made at present, and by and large, devoid of correct historical perspective can hardly be said to be reasonable and rewarding for the simple reason that we talk of Bhakti movement in relation to Alwar Saints who flourished during the 4th to 9th century A.D. at a time much later than *Sukhavati-vyuha* or Pure Land. Seet. of Mahayana Buddhism.

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LIBERATION AND ITS METAPHYSICAL BASIS — THE SIKH PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Shashi Bala

Liberation or *moksa* is the fundamental concept and is one of the four *purusarthas* of Indian philosophy. The aim of human life is to transcend the limitations of physio-psychic apparatus to attain this spiritual realisation or emancipation. The question arises, why *moksa* or emancipation is considered the highest goal to achieve? What type of this realisation is? What is the metaphysical basis of this pursuit of liberation? To answer these questions, it becomes imperative to study the concept of liberation in the Indian philosophy with a view to find out its development alongwith the rise of religious consciousness.

I

The word *moksa* or in sanskrit *mukti* is derived from the root 'muc' (+kṭin) meaning 'to set free' 'to let go', 'release', 'liberate', 'deliver' etc. So it is variously defined as freedom, liberation, emancipation, redemption, release and as life of blissfulness in and after death. This term *moksa*, with a similar meaning, is mentioned under different names in the systems of Indian philosophy such as *moksa*, *atmasaksatkara* and *apavarga* in the Nyaya-Vaisesika system, *Kaivalya* in Jainism and Samkhya; *nirvana* or *bodhi* in Buddhism. In the negative sense, it connotes freedom from fear, from grief and sorrow, from body, from attachment, from good and evil actions and from death; but in the positive sense, it means a state of ecstasy or of supreme bliss and realisation of self and God.

In the Vedic period, the concept of liberation is defined in the sense of mundane life and the attainment of joyous life on earth and in heaven. Here, to achieve this goal, two different kinds of methods are recommended for the seekers according to their mental level. For instance, observance of rituals and sacrifices for those who seek for mundane pleasures or heaven (*svarga-prapti*) and observances of ethical norms in accordance with the moral law (*rta*) for those who seek for bliss, ecstasy and immortality². This line of thought continued in the Upanishadic period, where two perspectives viz., absolutistic and theistic are mentioned. The former indicates to the attainment of identity of self with *Brahman*³ and the latter stresses on the attainment of communion with God.⁴ The stress of the one is on self-purification i.e. *sattva-suddhi* (*Mundayaka Upanishad*, III 1.8-20) and the other is on doing action in accordance with the will of God i.e. *Isvarartha* (*Svetasvatara. Upanishad*. IV.4).

The main emphasis of the Upanishads is on the attainment of immortality which is an experience of the identity of soul with the Supreme Self i.e. *Brahman*. The *atman* is self-luminous but in its embodied state is enclosed by the five sheaths or *kosas* viz. *annamaya-kosa* (sheath of food); *pranamaya-kosa* (vital sheath); *manomaya-kosa* (mental sheath); *vijnanamaya-kosa* (sheath of intellect); and *anandamaya-kosa* (sheath of bliss).⁵ The soul, in the state of liberation, is not identical with any of these sheaths but becomes completely free from all limitations. Though there is no indication of *jivanmukti* in the Vedas but there are frequent references of *jivanmukti* in the

Upanishads⁶ where it is defined as state of destruction of unproductive deeds (*Karmas*) and attainment of bliss.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the state of liberation is explicitly mentioned as *brahmisthiti*, *brahmanirvana* (II.72) and *Brahmabhuya* (XVIII.54) and the enlightened one i.e. *jivan-mukta* is stated as '*sthitaprajna*', *samadhritha* (II.54); *brahmabhuta* (V.24); *yogarudha* (VI.7); *bhakta* (XII.14,16,20), *gunatita* (XIV.25). Such persons attain a balanced state of mind and rise about the operating modes of *gunas* of *prakrti*, and they work for the welfare of mankind (*lokasamgraha*). The way to the attainment of liberation is through *yogas* viz. *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* and *jnana-yoga* or in other words, the synthesis of action, devotion and knowledge. The *Bhagavad Gita* mentions the two perspectives viz self-realisation i.e. *Brahmanirvana* (II.72; V.24-26) and living communion with God i.e. *Isvaraprapti* (IV.10; XIV.27). The former is possible through self-purification i.e. *atmasuddhi* (V.II; VI.12) and the latter is attained by surrendering all acts to God i.e. *Isvarartha* (XVIII.46).

In the classical systems of Indian philosophy, liberation is explained in two distinct ways. In the early Buddhists, Sankhya-Yoga and Nyaya-Vaisesika, *moksa* means complete freedom from sufferings and according to Jainism and Vedanta, it means 'the attainment of a state which involves the transcendence of the limitations incidental to our finite existence in the embodied form, and the realization of flowering of the potentialities for knowledge and bliss inherent in our own nature⁷. So here, liberation consists in the realization of one's own self and not in attaining communion with a Being external to self⁸.

The Buddhism used the term *nirvana* for liberation which consists in the total abolition of conscious experience i.e. cognitive, conative and affective. The two schools of Buddhism viz. *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* differ on the implications and means of *nirvana*. To the former, rigorous self-control, complete renunciation and eradication of all desires is needed to attain *nirvana* which is the ideal of *arhatship* and is a state of annihilation, of utter selfishness, inactive and uncompassionate. But the latter school views *nirvana* as an experience of bliss, knowledge and love and its ideal is the attainment of *boddhisattva* who is embodiment of great compassion (*mahakaruna*) and is active and lives for others perfection⁹.

In Jainism, *moksa* termed as *kaivalya* is a state of freedom free from all sufferings and limitations, caused by ignorance or *mithya dristi*, due to the influx of matter into the soul, called *asrava*. The bondage of soul is of two types viz., *bhava-bandha*, caused by impulses and dispositions and *dravya-bandha*, caused by attachment to different things. However, the cause of bondage is perversity of outlook (*mithyatva*). Jainism enumerates the eight types of *karmas*¹⁰ which obscure knowledge, intuition, feeling and create delusion. To attain *jivanmukti*, twofold process is stated viz., *samvara* and *nirjara*. The first means the cessation of the inflow of fresh karmic matter and the second suggests the annihilation of karmic matter which is already accumulated. The *jivanmukta* is defined as *kevalin*, *vitaraṅga*, *jina*, *arhat* who is a detached, omniscient and benefactor of the world, concerned with the detachment of self from matter.

The classical schools, Sankhya-Yoga, Nyaya-Vaisesika defines liberation as a state free from pain and suffering. In Sankhya, this state is reached by attaining discriminative knowledge between *purusa* and *prakrti* and by detaching the soul from all types of experiences by renunciation of desires. In the state of release, *purusa* is beyond the experiences of pleasure and pain, bondage and release, because these experiences belong to *prakrti* in its subtle psychical forms. The Yoga philosophy stresses on the cessation of *citta-vrtti* i.e. abolition of mental dispositions and recommends the eightfold¹¹ path to attain liberation. The last stage indicates to two types of *samadhi* i.e. *samprajnata* and *dharmamedha*. In the first state of *samadhi*, the aspirant attains intellectual revelation and in the second state of *samadhi*, he becomes free from all afflictions.

The Nyaya-Vaisesika schools also explain the state of liberation as free from all pain and pleasure, with the cessation of birth, body and consciousness. This state is the highest good or *apavarga*, attained through right knowledge which destroys the misapprehension caused by wrong knowledge of things. With the cessation of the cycle of birth and death, all states of consciousness cease.

A different conception of liberation is given in the Vedanta philosophy. According to Sankara, liberation means realization of the knowledge of absolute identity of self with Brahman. This type of enlightenment is possible here and now i.e. *jivanmukti* which is defined as the highest spiritual experience (*anubhuti*) and one abides ever in contemplation.¹² To such person, nothing can delude and bind and no moral compulsion exists for him.¹³ Here

liberation means realisation of the state of *Brahman* or universalisation of the finite soul. But Sankara never conceives the soul as apart from *Brahman*; the apparent difference of soul appears due to the identification of self with unreal and finite things. This knowledge of oneness is realised through a course of moral, intellectual and spiritual discipline, known as *sadhana catustya* viz. *viveka-vairagya*, *sama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titiksa*, *srddha* and *samdhana* and *mumuksutva*. After going through this discipline, the aspirant must try to understand the scripture by listening (*sravana*), by strengthening his convictions through reflection (*manana*) and by meditation (*nididhyasana*)¹⁴

Liberation in the *advaita* of Sankara is assumed to be attained through successive stages or by degrees, such as *Sadyomukti* immediate deliverance with the dawn of self-knowledge or *samyaga darsan* (right vision); *kramamukti*, which is gradual or step by step, possible for those who worship *Saguna Brahman*, through *saguna viday*; *jivanmukti* or deliverance, here and now, in the present life; and *videhmukti*, deliverance after death, i.e. liberation after the exhausting of all *praradha karmas*.¹⁵

The theistic phase of Indian philosophy starts with Ramanuja who unlike Sankara regards the path of knowledge (*jnanayoga*) as the means of self-realisation which culminates in the path of devotion (*bhakti-yoga*). So Ramanuja believed in the integration of action (*karma*), knowledge (*jnana*) and devotion (*bhakti*) to attain God-realisation. The mere intellectual enlightenment cannot annihilate ignorance, the cause of bondage, which needs spiritual discipline and complete perfection by developing

an intimate relation with God. Here liberation does not mean annihilation of the individuality of the self and merger or absorption into the *Brahman*. Contrarily, it stands for the complete perfection of the individual self, alongwith his identity with as well as difference from *Brahman*.

In the Sikh religion, liberation is taken in the sense of realisation of the intrinsic nature of self and thereby union of the individual soul (*jivatma*) with the Supreme Self i.e. (*paramatma*). This realisation is designated by such terms as *mukti*, *mokh*, *nirban*, *nirbanpad*, *nirbhaipad*, *mukati-padarath* etc.¹⁶ This state of emancipation is an experience of peace, bliss and ecstasy and is called an *unmani* state or *wismad* and is defined as *parampad*,¹⁷ *sahajavastha*,¹⁸ *turiya-avastha*¹⁹ and *amarapad*²⁰. Here the aim is not the attainment of heaven but is the communion with God. This is possible to attain in the present life i.e. *Jivanmukti*, which means the socio-spiritual development of man by inward illumination and by transcending the ego-consciousness to realise the universal-consciousness. So it is a kind of becoming through ethico-spiritual practices, which transform a human being into a *jivanmukta* known as *gurmukh* or *brahmgiyani*, who is free from all imperfections and has found blissful communion with God. Such enlightened persons rise above all duality and visualise the immanent spirit of Divine Being in His Creation. His total surrender to God with a spirit of faith and devotion, sublimates his ego and creates in him a feeling of altruism and universalism. This stage of *jivanmukti* precedes the stage of *videhmukti* and the latter is a continuation of the former stage. Here one

overcomes the pangs of births and deaths or transmigration and merges in the Infinite Divine light of God, i.e. *joti jot samana*.

II

A brief survey of the religious philosophies of India indicates to the fact that *moksa* or liberation is the summum bonum of life. Nonetheless it is possible to attain the state of ecstasy and bliss here and now, in the present life. In fact, it is not attainment of some outward object but is realisation of, what is already inherent in man, which in its pristine form, is identical with God. Thus the underlying idea of liberation is to realise one's own self and its identity with Brahman or communion with God.

The self in man is not an abstraction or any disembodied entity but is a doer of action and enjoyer of experience.²¹ The *katha upanishad* (III.3-4) defines the soul as rider in the body-chariot, in which the intellect is the charioteer; mind is the reins, sense organs are the horses and the sense objects are roads. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (VI.5-6), the self is defined in its role of friend as well as enemy, seeker as well as sought. The object is 'to reach the functional centre of being, the pivot around which the physiological and psychological capacities and functions are patterned as a perfectly orchestrated instrumental system'.²² The identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Self is illustrated by giving the example of 'two birds sitting on the same tree, one watching and the other enjoying the fruit'.²³

The Sikh Religion also believes in the identical relation of self and God. The soul in man is like God

Himself and it always remains awake in every heart.²⁴ It is defined as neither a human being, nor a god, neither it takes birth nor it dies.²⁵ The soul, being a divine spark, has god-like qualities and along with God dwells in the human heart but being embodied, never visualises the immanent presence of God.²⁶ To realise the true nature of self, it is pertinent to understand the 'operational dualism within unity'.²⁷ It requires oneself 'to be able to conceive of itself; to look at itself, as it looks at external objects'.²⁸ The self in man has two characteristics, the one relates to natural being and the other relates to conscious self. The former relates man, through natural instincts to the mundane world and the latter through spiritual capacities identifies him to the mundane world yet at the same time distinguish him from others. The aim of man's life is to transcend the spatio-temporal level of existence and to visualise God within himself. It needs inner transformation of man, which is possible not by 'prohibition against doing wrong' but by developing 'love for good'.²⁹

However, the highest stage self realization in Sikhism, is different from that of *moksa* in Hinduism and of *nirvana* in Buddhism. Here the aspirant has no desire of heaven or of release as is defined in the Indian philosophy, but he aspires to have a vision of the Lord and to serve Him, filled with devotion and love.³⁰ The realisation of this stage is possible at the empirical level and in the historical context. The seeker of truth must transcend from his self-centredness i.e. egoism to serve the interest of others with whom he comes into contact i.e. altruism. A more comprehensive view of self-realization enforces the evolvment of the individual self as well as

the social self to rise to the welfare of humanity of cosmos as a whole i.e. humanitarianism.

The stress of Sikhism is on the humanistic perspective which emphasises on action, creativity and development of concrete human being in historical situation. It repudiates the meta-praxiological approach of Vedanta philosophy with its stress on alienation of theory from practice, thought from action and intellectual from moral. Here no distinction is made between the contemplative man and the man of action. The main emphasis is on dedication of all actions to God i.e. doing or living in accordance with His Will. The emancipated man is a free moral agent, acting without any extraneous motive, and participating in the workings of God, for the fulfilment of Divine purpose. His actions are spontaneous expression of his evolved nature. Speaking about such actions, of enlightened men, Dr. Radhakrishnan opines, that 'it is the sense of obligatory duty that drops away, not action; work is not practised any longer as a discipline (*sadhana*), but becomes the functional expression (*lakshana*) of an evolved nature'.³¹ So there is 'effortlessness and ease of functioning'³² known as *sehaj* or *achint* in Sikhism.³³ All the acts of an emancipated man are the spontaneous expressions of his nature and are not done by conscious efforts or by evaluating the consequences.

To recapitulate, we can say that the metaphysical basis of liberation is self in man and its identical nature with *Brahman*. Due to this identity, there arises an urge to transcend the mundane world, to go beyond the ephemeral nature of things, to realise this true nature of

self and its identity or communion with the ultimate reality. The embodied soul, due to ignorance, indulges itself in the worldly allurements and undergoes through a series of births and deaths, subject to the law of *karma*. The Indian philosophy recommends different methods for the cessation of the transmigration of soul and for the realisation of *moksa*. Nonetheless, the Sikh religion recognises *jivan-mukti* as well as *videhmukti* but the stress is on the communion with God or on Divine vision. While repudiating the prevalent methods of performance of rituals or yogic exercises or contemplation or knowledge, the Sikh religion recommends the path of *namsimran* i.e. meditation of Holy Word, obtained through the divine preceptor (*Guru*) and in the company of holy congregation (*sangat*). The emancipated one need not renounce the world but can serve as beaconlight to the whole cosmos.

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RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION OF DALITS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PUNJAB

— Dr. Maheep Singh

The discrimination on the basis of race, colour, language, sex, caste, creed or on any other factor has been prevalent in the many societies of the world, but there is hardly any example that such discrimination has religious sanction. The Hindu society traditionally, gives sanction to the discrimination with the help of scriptures and had been emphatic to adhere to it. Any amount of indignity, cruelty, atrocity hurled on the Dalits has a ready ground of justification with innumerable quotes from the 'SHASTRAS'. Therefore the problem of Dalits in this country is not only a social problem, as in the other societies, it is a problem with deep rooted religious beliefs.

Efforts were made to do away with this attitude in the past, with the religious appeal, but the grip of the Brahminical supremacy was so strong that no significant change could be brought in removing this stigma. Such appeals and efforts could not bring about the needed social change.

But in the Punjab caste structure lacks the hierachical quality common in some other parts of the country. The amount of social change, in regard to the attitude towards the Dalit classes, which has gradually generated in the Punjab in the last five centuries, is very significant. The plight of the Dalits prevalent in many parts of the country, is rarely seen in this state. The

growth of Sikh religion has played a very important role in bringing this social change.

What is religion? Does it mean to activate a human being towards a situation that in spiritual world is known as salvation (Mukti) and that too by focusing his attentions on God, on the other world and by divesting his mind to the concerns and worries associated with the life after death? Or does it include raising a powerful strong voice against the injustices and atrocities being inflicted in this worldly material universe? Does it include becoming an alert, aware, vigilant person and living on industrious life while fulfilling ones duties? Normally religion is associated with such spiritual accomplishments that are not directly connected with the endeavours, pleasures, sorrows and struggles one experiences in this material, mundane world Even if they have some remote connection, they are not really acceptable and deserve to be despised.

The Indian life of medieval ages, during which Guru Nanak was born (1469-1539) had become a victim of this kind of life style. On one hand the people were being attacked continuously by Turks, Pathans and Mughals and other Tribes from central Asia. On the other hand innumerable people were being forced to live a life worse than one led by animals, because of 'chaturvarna' system and its forced implementation by the 'SMRITIS' and 'SAMHITAS' (the religious code books). This system had divided the society into countless castes-high and low, touchables and untouchables.

Under the circumstances Guru Nanak did not restrict religion and spirituality to the sole concern of the other world, salvation, transmigration of soul. Instead, he

associated it with the temporal concerns of the people. He helped the people to step out of their individualistic existence and made them aware of their social responsibilities. He admonished them for their shortcomings. He inspired them to stand up against injustice and tyranny. He made them aware of values that are based on equality, fraternity and freedom. He inspired them to sacrifice their lives if necessary to protect these values. With the passage of time, Sikhism and social justice became complementary to each other.

People in this country have been victims of social inequality and the resultant social outrages. The Varna system does not divide people into only four classes, it also creates discrimination vis-a-vis high and low of acceptability and non-acceptability. This system makes one class (Brahmin) as God on the earth and other class (Shudra) untouchable pushing him into the abysmal darkness of hatred, condemnation and disregard. In history there are some examples which show that voices were raised against this system, but these never became a powerful voice, as these never became an organised movement. The shudra 'SHAMBUK' of Ramayana period wanted to meditate and pray, but this was forbidden in the scriptures. And when a shudra dared to do so, Lord Rama killed him. Eklavya of Maharabharat period was a tribal 'Bheel'. He wanted to be as accomplished in archery as the high caste kshatriya princes. Guru Dronacharya asked for his right thumb as 'Guru Dakshina', rendering him unfit for using this skill.

The sayings of Namdev of Maharashtra (13th century) and Kabir and Ravidas of Varanasi (15th century) are included in Guru Granth Sahib. They spoke about this unjust system. Expressing his deep pain and anguish on the indignities he suffered, Namdev said

O God With a joyful heart I came into Thy temple.
While engaged in Thy worship, the priest caught me by
the hand;
Pushed me out.
O, King of Yadavs!
Low is my caste;
Why didst Thou give me birth in a dyer's home?

This discriminatory system did not only place the human being socially low, it also created deep sense of inferiority complex. Ravidas painfully said-

My caste is low, my birth is low
my work is low.
O, God, I have come for shelter
sayeth Ravidas the cobbler

Kabir had suffered terribly under this system. He asked the Brahmin in a challenging mood-

If you dost claim to be a Brahmin
by the birth from a Brahmin woman,
why was thy birth not from a different source.

Making mockery of caste system based on one's birth, he asked-

How are you Brahmins and we are Shudras?
How were we made of mere blood
and you of milk.

It was Sikhism that gave an organised form to this desperation and protest. Guru Nanak was born in a so-called high caste, but he associated himself completely with the oppressed, depressed and condemned people. He said-

The lowest among the low caste
Those still lower and condemned
Nanak is by their side;
He envies not the great of the world.
Lord! Thy grace falls on the land where the poor
are cherished.

This was a powerful voice against the social injustice of that time. This voice was not confined to Guru Nanak only, it continued to become a movement. The Sikh Gurus, did not limit this protest only to their dictum and preachings. They made it a part of their living style. During his journeys Guru Nanak accepted the hospitality of those who were considered low caste. Many a times there were confrontations and clashes. He always faced the situation and stood by the weaker section. The episode of Bhai Lalo and Malik Bhago confirms this fact.

Guru Gobind Singh the tenth master (1666-1708) too faced similar situations. On Baisakhi day (1699) he had called a big assembly at Anandpur sahib, situated in the hills of the Punjab, in which people from different parts of India had gathered. For the armed revolution against injustice and oppression, he had asked for few heads to be sacrificed. Of the five people who answered his call, one was khatri, one Jat, one kahar (water carrier) one Nai (Barber) and one chhipa (Dyer). Four out of these five were from the backward and Dalit classes. It was with the help of these five that Guru Gobind Singh organised his khalsa army. He fought many battles and prepared for the struggle which was to take place in the near future. The honourable place he gave to the oppressed and backward classes in his entire system was becoming a cause for envy amongst the higher classes. These people protested

and asked Guru Gobind Singh-" can you achieve your aims with the help of these low caste people? Brahmins are the one who impart knowledge, the kshatriyas show their skill in the battle field, the Vaishyas help you with money. What will you get from these Shudras?

Guru Gobind Singh replied-

"It is through the kindness of these people that I have won all my battles and have been able to grant gifts to others. It is through their favour that my troubles have been over come and prosperity has increase. It is through their favour that I have acquired knowledge and my enemies have been exterminated. Through their favour have I acquired honour otherwise there are millions of ordinary mortals like me.

Perhaps no other greatman in the world has ever spelt out the importance of the downtrodden, the way Guru Gobind Singh did. He also said- **"It is a great pleasure for me to serve them, no other service pleaseth my heart. To grant gifts to them is the right thing, to grant gifts to others seemeth of no avail to me. To bestow gifts on them beareth fruit in the next world and bringeth honour in this, to bestow them on others is of no use at all. Let my body, my mind, my head my wealth and all that is mine be dedicated to their service.**

Dr. Indu Bhushan Bannerji writes in his famous book on Sikh history-Evolution of khalsa" that when Guru Gobind Singh told these (high caste) people to forget their caste pride, they were so annoyed that they disassociated themselves from the Guru.

"Guru Gobind Singh did not worry about this non-co-operation. Bhai Ratan Singh Bhangu, author of panth Prakash (early 18th century) writes "Guru Gobind Singh announced that I will give new meaning and purpose to the lives of those who have been victims of discrimination and oppression for centuries. I will give them dignity and respectability. Many caste like jat, petty traders, blacksmith, carpenter, dyer, wine seller, gujjar, kambo, fisherman, barber, Potter, goldsmith, sweeper, cobbler, bard, beggar brahmin etc., who do not know the intricacies of politics, I will give these poor Sikhs kingship, so that they remember my Guruship."

Why did Guru Gobind Singh have to say this with so much pertinacity? When he asked his fellow caste people to join this massive movement, they replied- "we are khatris and belong to high caste in which all the Gurus are born. But you have included Shudras in your '**Panth**'. How can we become shudras by mingling with them".

To reject the discriminatory caste system, it was necessary to attack the supremacy of the Priest class. The Gurus rejected the monopoly of Brahmins on Priesthood. Fifth Guru, Guru Arjan (1563-1606) appointed a Jat, Baba Budha as the first priest of Harimandir at Amritsar. This was a very significant step towards social change.

Fourth Guru; Guru Ramdas (153-1606) laid the foundation of the city of Amritsar. The fifth Guru, constructed Harimandir in Amritsarovar. Guru Granth Sahib was compiled by him. These were important steps taken in the sphere of religious and social change.

Guru Ram das had not conceived Amritsar as a town only. He wanted to make it the socio-religious center for the new movement. There was no shortage of places of pilgrimage at that time. But they were totally under the control of the Brahmin priests. Everything was regulated there as per their dictum and desires. Even the smallest religious ceremony could not be completed without the help of these priests.

The same point of view was adopted for the compilation of Guru Granth Sahib.

The Brahmins had full control over Hindu religious scriptures. It is only they who studied them, interpreted them and gave their rulings. Shudras and women were not permitted to study the scriptures.

Entry to the temple built by Guru Arjan was not prohibited to any one. The Granth compiled by him was also available to all. This did not only mean that everyone could study it, he sought the co-operation and participation of varied sections of society for this Granth. It is for that reason that the compositions of sheikh Farid, (Muslim) Kabir, (Weaver) Namdev, (Dyer) Ravidas, (Cobler) Dhanna (Jat) alongwith Parmanand and Ramanand (Barahmins) and many more were included in it. This was a new kind of scripture that was acceptable to all, everyone could say- this is mine.

In traditional Indian society, woman was regarded inferior to man and was looked down upon. Guru Nanak gave here a status of equality- nay, of superiority- and she was freely admitted to his congregations. He condemned the practice of Sati or the custom of self-immolation of

widows on the pyres of their dead husbands. Says Nanak:

**"It is by woman, the condemned one, that we are
conceived,
and from her that we are born;
it is woman we befriend, and it is she who keeps
the race going.**

**When one woman dies, another is sought for;
and it is with her that we get established in society.
Why should we call here evil from whom great men
are born?**

Guru Nanak and the later Sikh Gurus not only supported the just life style on religious and social level, they also initiated this on political level.

The saints preferred to remain away from the politics. But the beliefs and reactions of Sikh Gurus were of a different nature. Expressing his anger over the ruling system of his time, Guru Nanak said :-

**The kings are tigers and the courtiers are dogs.
They go and harass the sitting and the sleeping
ones.**

**The king's servants inflict wound with their nails.
The king's curs lick up the blood and life of the
poor subjects.**

**where, in the Lord's court, the men are to be
assayed.**

**The noses of these untrust worthy one shall be
chopped off".**

Describing the general condition of the country, Guru Nanak said :-

The age is like a drawn knife
The kings are virtual butchers.
Righteousness has taken wings:
In the dark night of falsehood
I see nowhere the moon of Truth
In bewilderment I grope for truth.
In utter gloom of degradation,
I see on parth, no way for humanity.

With this background the social life of the Punjab gradually transformed itself. Now the caste structure in the Punjab lacks the hierarchical quality common in some other parts of the country. It does not conform to 'Varna' model with Brahmins at the apex followed by other twice-born castes and with shudras at the bottom. Caste is more of an occupational than ritual category, i.e. dominance flows from secular and not ritual pre-eminence. Despite these special features of the caste groups in the state, caste in the Punjab still partakes of certain general features of caste, common throughout the country. Caste is still a hereditary endogamous group, having some sort of traditional association with an occupation and a fairly high degree of commensality occurs within members of the same caste.

No doubt, the preachings of Sikh religion and later the activities of Arya samaj and Adi Dharma movements created a vast ground for social change. But the forces of hierarchy priestly classes and so called upper caste people continued with the age old mentality of prejudice towards the Dalits. It is a big paradox that, with the lapse of time, the control of the important Sikh shrines slipped into the hands of the priest who subscribed to old Brahminical

ways of high and low caste. The result was, that the offerings brought by the Sikhs of Dalit classes were not accepted in the Golden Temple (Harimandir) at Amritsar. After the annexation of Punjab (1849) Brahminical Priesthood found an opportunity to rehabilitate itself in the Sikh places of religious worship and began to guide the Sikh ceremonies and rites. The old simplicity laid down and directed by the Gurus had come to be warped by the Brahminical complexities and rituals and even the idols of Hindu deities had come to be installed in most of the Sikh religious places.

The Singh Sabha movement and late Akali movement created the fresh awakening amongst the Sikhs and they challenged the authority of the priests for this type of un-sikh like practice. The dispute was settled ultimately and the priests agreed to have a 'Waak' (Order) from Guru Granth Sahib (The Holy scripture) to find a solution to the issue. The Guru's word came as follows.

"He (God) receives the lowly into grace.

"And puts them in the path of righteous service"

This exactly met the situation and the priests left the place handing over the control of the Golden Temple to the people.

Punjab has the largest scheduled Caste population in this country i.e. about 27 per cent. They are evenly divided between Hindus and Sikhs. There are Budhists and Adi Dharmi scheduled castes also but very small in number.

This population is economically backward. Majority of it works as agricultural labourers, known as 'siris', on

an yearly wages or as farm hands on daily wages. A large number of them have migrated to the urban areas for better employment opportunities. It is interesting and significant to note that many scheduled caste Sikhs have taken to priesthood as Bhais, Granthis and Ragis or as helpers 'sewadars' in the Gurdwaras. This way they have totally changed the outlook regarding the priestly class of the traditional Hindu Society.

The Sikh Light Infantry, a regiment of Indian Army, consists of the Sikhs belonging to scheduled castes. This regiment is widely known for its courage and valour in the battle field.

A good number of the members of the scheduled castes from the Punjab, particularly from Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts have migrated to foreign countries, especially to U.K. and Canada. Just because of their hardwork they have earned a lot of money in these countries. They frequently visit their native places and keep on sending money to their kith & kin. This factor has changed the living pattern of many people of these classes in this area.

There is some similarity in regard to the treatment given to the Dalits in the Punjab villages. In spite of the fact that Sikhism broke all the barriers of eating food and worshipping in the Gurdwaras for all the communities together, the landowning classes, the jats, Sikh & non-Sikhs both, seldom allowed the Dalits to enjoy equality in the villages for a very long time. Any attempt by them to assert their rights was met with force.

To protest against this injustice a powerful movement was born in the Punjab, known as Adi Dharma.

It flourished from 1925 to 1935 in the central Punjab districts of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, claiming perhaps a million adherents. The name of the movement "Adi Dharm" signified the central concept; that the Dalits were not members of Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism or any other upper caste religion; Rather they were members of a distinctly separate religious community, indeed the oldest religion of India. They claimed that theirs was the Adi Dharma, the original religion worshipped by the pre-Aryan ancestors of modern India. Taking a theme which was later elaborated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, they claimed that the upper castes were descendants of the Aryan interlopers from outside.

Through the leadership of a remarkable man Mangoo Ram the Adi Dharma movement led local campaigns against discrimination, agitated for government reforms and registered themselves in the census as a separate religious community. But perhaps the Adi Dharma movement's greatest significance was in the fact that it existed as a movement for political identity and cultural pride.

Democratic concept and growing awareness regarding the right to elect representative to the law making and enforcing bodies in the government, the sheduled castes are getting more and more conscious of their position in every part of the country. In the Punjab this awareness seems to be much higher than in the rest of the country.

Three hundred years ago Guru Gobind Singh had realised that unless the people of downtrodden classes became politically aware and assertive, their plight will not change. In his own life time he turned them from meek,

weak and humble to person bold, brave and fighters. In the eighteenth century the leaders of Sikh fighting groups were mainly Jats, Carpenters, Kalals (wine sellers) - all belonging to backward classes. The Sikhs, belonging to Dalit castes formed the integral part of the Sikh soldiery. Guru Gobind Singh was so much pleased with their bravery and sense of service that once he said-This Rangreta (low caste) Sikh is beloved son of the Guru.—
Rangreta Guru ka Beta



THE 300TH BIRTH-ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHALSA PANTH (1699-1999)

— HARNAM SINGH SHAN

1

The world-wide celebration of the Khalsa Tercentenary during the April 1999 — April 2000 reminds us of an epoch-making event of the history of the world, in general, and that of the Indian subcontinent, in particular.

It took place in the Fort Kesgarh, standing on a hillock in Anandpur Sahib, situated at the foot of the Shivalik Hills, about 6 kms. away from the left bank of the river Satluj, almost in-between Ropar and Nangal towns of the Indian Panjab.

That unique event occurred on the Vaisakhi Day, that is on the first day of the month of Vaisakh 1756 Bk., corresponding to the 30th March of 1699 A.D., which now usually falls on the 13th or sometimes the 14th April, owing to the adoption in 1752 A.D. of the Gregorian Calendar by the British and the difference accruing between the Christian and the Bikrami year since then.

2

Vaisakhi is an age-old seasonal, mid-spring harvest festival of the subcontinent, which is celebrated annually and enthusiastically in its North, in one form or the other, on the commencement of the month of Vaisakh, the first of the 12 months constituting the Hindu solar year. In Panjab, the Land of Five Rivers, its fair is held when, according to one of its eminent poets, Lala Dhani Ram Chatricik, "its wheat crop ripens, the loquat becomes juicy, the mango-tree blooms and the rose-plant blossoms (*Kesar-*

Kiari, 52). It is celebrated, then, as a symbol of ripening and fruition, and also as a harbinger of happiness and plenty.

It became an important festival on the Sikh Calendar during the pontificate of Guru Amar Das (1479-1574), the third Sikh prophet-preceptor, as an annual congregational fair at Goindwal Sahib, District Amritsar. The Sikh communities, spread in various parts of the subcontinent, continued to assemble on every Vaisakhi day, at the holy seats of their subsequent prophets, for the celebration of the occasion and re-union in the presence of the Guru, their Master and Enlightener.

When Anandpur Sahib, the City of Bliss, founded on the 19th of June 1665 by Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), the ninth Sikh prophet, became the abode of Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708); the tenth Sikh prophet, the Sikhs from all over India began to gather there annually to pay their homage to him and celebrate the Vaisakhi at his hallowed headquarters.

3

But the Vaisakhi that fell on the 30th of March 1699 and for which they gathered there, as usual, proved a red-letter day not only for them but also for all those who could not make their way to Anandpur Sahib on that memorable occasion.

It became associated then with such a momentous event which does not seem to have a parallel in the religious, social, cultural and political spheres of the world. Its occurrence added to its festivities an event of such a great significance that changed the very course of history

in a short time. It ushered in a new phase in the annals of mankind and marked the beginning of the rise of a new people, 'destined to play the role of the hero against all oppression and tyranny'. It heralded the birth of an altogether new Order, a new nation, called the Khalsa Panth, "the democratic institution of Khalsa, an astonishingly original and novel creation", says Sri Aurobindo, the sage of Pondicherry, "whose face was turned not to the past but to the future" (*Indian Culture*, p. 150).

It was on that historic day, when the Sikhs from far and near assembled there in very large numbers to celebrate Vaisakhi, that Guru Gobind Singh gave the concrete form to the institution of the Khalsa and founded the Khalsa Brotherhood. It was on that Vaisakhi Day that the Great Guru, according to Syed Mohammed Latif, author of the first-ever *History of Panjab* in English (1889), "embarked on his great enterprise, that of remodeling the Hindu religion and abolishing the distinction of castes by trying to bring all men, without the distinction of race and descent, to the adoration of that Supreme Being before whom all men, he argued, were equal, he summoned to his presence all Sikhs ... In less than a fortnight 80,000 Sikhs flocked to Makhoval (old name of the site of Anandpur Sahib) in obedience to the command of the Guru." (p. 263)

4

As stated by Guru Gobind Singh in his autobiography, *Bachitter Natak*, God had sent him into this world "for an avowed purpose", elaborating which he said :

ਹਮ ਇਹ ਕਾਜ ਜਗਤ ਮੇ ਆਏ,
ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਗੁਰਦੇਵਿ ਪਠਾਏ।

ਜਹਾ ਤਹਾ ਤੁਮ ਧਰਮ ਬਿਬਾਰੇ,
 ਦੁਸ਼ਟ ਦੇਖੀਯਨਿ ਪਕਰਿ ਪਛਾਰੇ।
 ਯਾਹੀ ਕਾਜ ਧਰਾ ਹਮ ਜਨਮੰ,
 ਸਮਝ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਾਧੂ ਸਭ ਮਨੰਮ:
 'ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ, ਸੰਤ ਉਬਾਰਨ,
 ਦੁਸ਼ਟ ਸਭਨ ਕੇ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਾਰਨ'।...
 (ਦਸਮ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਪੰ. 74)

The Supreme Lord had sent me here
 to uphold *Dharma* (Righteousness).
 He had commanded me
 to spread true faith everywhere;
 and seize and smash the wicked and the tyrants
 Know it well in your hearts O pious people!
 I have taken birth,
 to promulgate true religion,
 to exalt the virtuous,
 and to uproot the vicious.

(*Dasam Granth Sahib*, p. 74)

So, in order to fulfil that ordained mission, Guru Gobind Singh had decided to create for its consummation a national army of saint warriors, called later *Akalpurakh ki Fauj* (God's Own Legion), out of such devoted followers to wreck the forces of tyranny, injustice and intolerance. (*Sarbh Granth*, p. 352).

He had, therefore, planned to do something very bold, practical and spectacular that day to inspire them and also to revolutionise the very thought and will of the people who were so demoralised and terror-stricken that even the sight of a sword terrified them.

5

As all assembled for the morning service in the Fort Kesgarh, they eagerly waited for the holy presence of their beloved Master. After the conclusion of the *Kirtan* (hymn-singing), when Guru Gobind Singh appeared there, the vast congregation stooped and greeted him most reverently and heartily. But he, instead of delivering the much-awaited sermon, unsheathed his sword, all of a sudden, flourished it and thundered, "My sword is thirsty and needs today a head to quench its thirst for blood. Is there any devout Sikh present here who is willing to offer his head to me, right now, as a sacrifice for the sake of *Dharma*?"

That sudden, strange and stunning demand numbed the massive gathering, which was highly horrified and looked on in awed silence. The Guru repeated the call in order to test the unquestioning devotion and ready response, with complete surrender and fervour, of the faith-followers to the call for supreme sacrifice in such a righteous cause, enjoined, as under, by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh faith :

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ,
ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ।
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ,
ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ।
(ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਪੰ 1412)

If you are keen to play the Game of Love,
step into my street,
with your head placed on your palm.
Having thus set your foot upon it,
lay down your head without any fear or grudge.
(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1412)

At his third thundering call, one Daya Ram, a Khatri by caste from Lahore (Pakistani Panjab), arose, offered his head for the supreme sacrifice and walked behind the Guru into an adjoining tented enclosure. People could hear only a thud of the sword from that direction.

Guru Gobind Singh returned to the assemblage, after a while, with his sharp-edged sword dripping blood and his eyes shining like fire. There was all the more consternation in the audience, panic ensued and some men fled for their lives when he roared again asking for another head, there and then. Another Sikh, Dharam Das, a jat from Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh), answering to the call, stood up and placing his head at the Guru's disposal, followed him into the same enclosure. On his three subsequent similar calls, Mohkam Chand, a washerman from the far-off Dwarka (Gujarat) in the west; Sahib Chand, a barber, from the distant Bidar (Karnataka) in the south; and Himmat Rai, a water-carrier from Jagannathpuri (Orissa) in the east, came forward, one after the other, to offer their heads. They were similarly taken by the Guru into the same enclosure. (Gurbilas, pp. 174-75)

Fully satisfied and overjoyed at that signal proof of heroic devotion and unquestioning offer of the five for the supreme sacrifice at his bidding, the Guru put a stop to further calls for the same.

The horror and suspense of the people turned into wonder and amazement when after some longer break, Guru Gobind Singh led the five back to the assemblage. They were wonder-struck to see them again, not only alive but also hale and hearty, radiant and glorious, dedicated

and inspiring. They were gorgeously dressed alike in saffron-coloured garments, neatly tied turbans and beautiful waistbands with glittering swords dangling by their sides. When they emerged, one after the other, following their Master dressed alike, they looked strangely like him to whom they had given their heads and he, in turn, had given them his own self and glory. As they entered the assembly, it burst into spontaneous joy and greeted them with the resounding shouts of *Sat Sri Akal* (Glory to the Eternal Lord) and *Dhann Satguru* (Glory to the True Guru).

6

In order to initiate them and administer to them the vows of baptism to mark their re-birth in the New Order, Guru Gobind Singh then called for a steel bowl and filled it with the clean water of Satluj. Kneeling beside it, he began churning it with a steel *Khanda* (double-edged broadsword, symbolising the two swords of *Miri* and *Piri*, indicating temporal and spiritual sovereignty) and reciting over it five of the sacred Banis (texts) to sanctify it. He asked the chosen five to sit around it reverently in the heroic posture, concentrating their thoughts on God while gazing on the nectar under preparation. In the meanwhile, the Guru's blessed wife, Mata Jito Ji, came in with a lapful of *patashas* (sugar puffs) by way of her offering. The Guru told her to pour those into the bowl, mingling their sweetness with the grace of the Divine Word and the alchemy of steel. "While the sacred Word and the sword will bless my Sikhs with God's grace and valour and turn them into saintly warriors", he said, "the sweetness of sugar will foster in them love and compassion, the milk of human kindness".

When that holy elixir, called *Amrit* (Nectar of Immortality) or *Khande di Pahul*, replacing the traditional *charanpahul* (wash of master's feet) became ready with his exalted spritis dissolved in it, Guru Gobind Singh supplicated to God to seek his blessing and command. He then gave to each, by turns, five palmfuls of it to drink, repeating after him a new salutation: *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh* (i.e. Hail to the Khalsa belongs to God and hail to him to Whom belongs the Victory). He then sprinkled it, turn by turn, over each one's face, gazing intensely into his eyes, kindling his spirit with his own inner light and calling him at each shower to utter loudly the above salutation. After anointing their hair also with that holy nectar, he passed its bowl on to them, asking them to take, by turns, its deep draughts, sharing it among themselves and signifying thereby their initiation into the new, casteless and classless fraternity of the Khalsa, a blessed community of the 'purified ones' (Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas*, 173-174).

Having accomplished that so far unheard of ceremony, Guru Gobind Singh introduced them to the congregation as *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa* (God's Elect) and also his *Panj Piare* (Beloved Five) who represented the whole spectrum of the Indian Society.

7

Inaugurating thus the New Order, the Khalsa Panth, a God-fearing, 'self-abnegating, martial and classless fellowship', 'Guru Gobind Singh declared them to be its nucleus, the nucleus of the Khalsa Commonwealth, a nation of saint-warriors and warrior-saints. Addressing them as *Bhais* (brothers), changing the suffixes of their

previous names and giving them one uniform family name, he surnamed them with a common appellation, *Singh*, meaning lion and implying an equal and uniform status for one and all.

In order to ensure that they remain distinguished from the rest of the world, he prescribed a common uniform consisting of five defining emblems, which they were required to wear always. All beginning with the letter 'k', these are called *Panj kakaar*, namely Kes (unshorn long hair and beard), *Kangha* (a comb tucked in the Kes to keep it tidy and hold its knot), *Kachcha* (breeches), *Kara* (a steel bracelet on the right wrist) and *Kirpan* (a sword). Their regular use gave them distinct identity and a semblance of unity and equality. It developed their integrated personality and became the hallmark of the Sikhs, easily recognisable by their wear and appearance. The newly introduced salutation was to maintain their link with God, Guru, faith-followers and victory by God's grace (*Gur Sobha*, chs., 5-6, *Guru Kian Sakhiam*, Sakhi No. 61)

Enforcing a vigorous application of the principles originally expounded by Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Gobind Singh enjoined them to worship none but God and consider all human beings as His progeny and hence equal :

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਚਾਨਬੈ...
ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਬੈ, ਏਕੈ ਜੋਤਿ ਜਾਨਬੈ।
(ਦਸਮ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਪੰ. 28)

Recognise all humanity
as one spirit,
And all human beings manifestation of
One Divine Form and One Divine Light

(*Dasam Granth Sahib*, p. 28)

Pronouncing their complete break from their past on their rebirth in the Khalsa Panth, they were also enjoined to regard themselves beneceforth as *Khalsa*, that is God's and Guru's own people. They were to call themselves not mere Sikhs or disciples but also *Singhs* or lions. The Guru's house being their family house, Guru Gobind singh their religious father, Mata Sahib Kaur their religious mother and Anandpur their place of birth, they were to consider themselves as brothers and sisters to one another. This also implied the renunciation of their earlier creeds, religious practices, spiritless rituals, customs, conventions and superstitions; as well as the obliteration of all disparities, and discriminations based on castes, callings, countries, races and genders differentiations called the five deliverances and mentioned as *Dharma Nash*, *Janam Nash*, *Karam Nash*, *Bharam Nash* and *Sharam Nash* in the Sikh parlance. (*Guru Kian Sakhian*, p. 144).

Guru Gobind Singh also exhorted them to be pure and true 'in thought, word and deed', to live upto the highest moral and ethical standards; to succour the needy and help the helpless; and to be ever ready to fight tyranny, oppression and injustice.

Laying down also some specific injunctions for their personal conduct (*rehat-kurehat*), he forbade the cutting and trimming of hair, chewing and smoking of tobacco, committing of adultery and eating of meat of an animal slaughtered slowly in the Muslim way (Kuir Singh's *Gurbilas*, pp. 127-29)

Guru Gobind Singh, then, himself stood up before the Blessed Five and besought with folded hands to be baptised likewise and admitted into their Brotherhood

This almost stunned them and the whole congregation. "You being our Master and we being your disciples", they exclaimed, "how can we baptise and initiate you in the Order you yourself have created"? The Guru explained, "It is an altogether new Order and new form of baptism which recognises no difference between the high and low, between me and the Khalsa which has been evolved in my own image as (my beloved ideal) and (my alter ego). I am establishing this new Fraternity on the basis of complete equality by asking to become your disciple and merge thereby into its Fellowship. As I am your Guru, you collectivity should be my Guru. Having invested you with authority as Khalsa, I therefore, beg to be admitted into its fold in the very same manner". (*Suraj Parkash*, p. 5059).

The Beloved Five then prepared the nectar of steel in the same manner, administered it to him in exactly the same way and changed his name from Guru Gobind Das to Guru Gobind Singh, much to the utter amazement of all, one of whom exclaimed :

ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ

ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਚੇਲਾ।

(ਵਾਰ ਰਾਮਕਲੀ, ਪਉ. 15)

Hail, O Hail Guru Gobind Singh!

Who himself is the Master and also the disciple
at the same time.

(*Var Ramkali*, st. 15)

Never before a Master is known to have turned himself into a disciple of his own initiated ones, considered them superior to himself, besought their favour, sat at their feet and got himself initiated in the same way at

their hands. He did not claim any higher privileges than those he had allowed to them. Gurū Gobind Singh "enunciated thus", says Dr. Hari Ram Gupta, "ninety years earlier, the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which formed the bedrock of the French Revolution" (*History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 2820.)

According to Sir Arnold Toynbee, he anticipated Lenin by two centuries by infusing democratic spirit and temper in his people. (*A Study of History*, abr., p. 748)

He similarly anticipated, thereby, two and a half centuries earlier, the ideals intentions and aspirations incorporated in 1945 in the Preamble to the United Nations' Charter, reaffirming "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human beings, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations - large and small".

"establishing 'conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations ... can be maintained', and promoting 'social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.'" (*Everyman's U.N.*, p. 1) This was so because he believed and proclaimed on that very day :

ਮਾਨਸ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ, ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕਸ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਉ ਹੈ...
ਨਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਦੇਸਨ ਕੇ ਭੇਸ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਉ ਹੈ।
ਏਕੈ ਨੈਨ, ਏਕੈ ਕਾਨ, ਏਕੈ ਦੇਹ, ਏਕੈ ਬਾਨ,
ਖਾਕ, ਬਾਦ, ਆਤਿਸ਼, ਐ ਆਬ ਕੇ ਰਲਾਉ ਹੈ।...
ਏਕ ਹੀ ਸਰੂਪ ਸਬੈ, ਏਕ ਹੀ ਬਨਾਉ ਹੈ।
(ਦਸਮ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ। ਪੰ. 28)

Humans are the same all over
though each has different appearance
under different local influences

and environments of different countries ...

All have the same eyes, the same ears,

the same body and the same build,

compounded of the same elements:

earth, air, fire and water ...

They are all alike, all of one form,

as the One God alone has made all of them.

(*Dasam Granth Sahib*, p. 28)

9

Such an unprecedented 'submission', 'identification' and 'merger' of the Guru's own entity with that of the self-created community, at his own asking, electrified the atmosphere to such an extent that, according to the report, dated 16th of April 1699, of the official newswriter of the Mughal court, said to be present there,

Twenty thousand persons accepted the Guru's gospel and pledged to act upon it.

(*Ahmed Shah's Tawarikh-i-Hind*, p. 377)

As Guru Gobind Singh permitted any five baptised Singhs, representing the said Beloved Five, to administer that chastening baptismal nectar to any number of men, the baptismal ceremony continued for several days. "Countless batches, followed one more eager than the other. Anadpur was seized with an uncanny fervour of the spirit". Thus, thousands more of the Sikhs entered the fold of the Khalsa then at Anadpur Sahib. (*Malcom's Sketch of the Sikhs*, p. 45).

And that holy process of initiation continues till today with the same spirit and in the same manner in the holy presence of Guru Granth Sahib, installed as his successor and Guru Eternal for the Sikhs.

10

Four out of the Chosen Five who were the first to be initiated thus and from whom Guru Gobind Singh got himself initiated soon afterwards, belonged to the backward and depressed classes. Three of them came from those low castes which were considered 'untouchables' and were subjected to injustice, torture and humiliation down the ages.

All of them hailed from different directions and various parts of the subcontinent, indicating thus the inter-communal and inter-provincial character, that is the national content, of that huge and unique assemblage of the people. And they arrived at Anandpur in thousands, facing all sorts of hurdles from the tyrannous foreign regime; hazards and hardships of long and arduous journeys in the absence of such means of communication and transportation as are available now to reach this secluded and distantly placed town of the Northern India of the seventeenth century. The arrangements made there for their reception, gathering, lodging and boarding, etc., in those hard times and under hostile circumstances, can well be imagined.

Baptising them in such an inspiring and unheard-of way, Guru Gobind Singh wrought a revolutionary change in their minds and aroused their dormant energies to positive, constructive and altruistic purposes. He poured his own life, soul and spirit in them. So much so that he publicly declared:

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ,
ਖਾਲਸੇ ਮੇ ਹਉ ਕਰੈ ਨਿਵਾਸ।
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਿੰਡ ਪ੍ਰਾਣ,

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਾਨ ਕੀ ਜਾਨ। ...
(ਸਰਬਲੋਹ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ, ਪੰ 531)

The Khalsa is exactly like me,
I ever abide in the Khalsa.
The Khalsa is my body and soul,
The Khalsa is the life of my life. ..

(*Sarabloh Granth*, p.531)

He invested them with his own personality and enthused them with a deep sense of self-help, self-respect Self reliance and self-confidence; dignity and chivalry of the highest order.

The names given to them also symbolised the five cardinal virtues of the Sikh faith, namely *Daya* (compassion), *Dharam* (righteousness), *Himmat* (courage), *Mohkam* (fortitued) and *Sahib* (Self-control).

While raising the new Order, Guru Gobind Singh inculcated such great virtues in his followers that exacted later an unusual and magnificent tribute even from a sworn enemy, Qazi Nur Muhammad, who accompanied the Afghan army of Ahmad Shah Durrani on his seventh invasion of India in 1764. Writing about their many enviable qualities, he stated in 1765 - sixty five years after their rebirth in the Order of the Khalsa, for the knowledge of his own countrymen:

The word *Singh* in their title which means a lion, truly they are like lions and are courageous like lions in the battlefield. Hear another point in which they excel all other fighting people. They had neither the fear of slaughter nor the dread of death. In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive.

In times of peace, they surpass Hatim Tai in generosity. They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of a woman, be she a well-to-do lady or a maidservant. There is no adultery among them. they do not make friends with adulterers and housebreakers (*Jangnamah* sec. 41).

11

Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa Panth on the equalitarian basis, according to which all its adherents were to be as co-equal members of the Khalsa Fraternity and the lowest was to be equal to the highest. He, thereby, concretised another revolutionary pronouncement of Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism, who maintained about two centuries earlier:

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ,
ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚ।
ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ,
ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ?
ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ,
ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ।
(ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ, ਪੰ 15)

I seek the kinship of the lowliest,
the lowest among the low-born.
Why emulate the so-called high-born?
God's elevating grace lies there
where the lowly are properly looked after.

(*Guru Granth Sahib*, p.15)

The sermon which Guru Gobind Singh delivered on that historic day to the vast Vaisakhi gathering, laid a

special emphasis on this particular aspect of his mission. According to the official report sent to Emperor Aurangzeb at Delhi by the newswriter, the Guru proclaimed:

All should come into the fold of one creed
so that the differences among them may disappear,
And all the four castes of the Hindus ..
should follow one path and one form of adoration of
God.

They should consider one another as equals
and no one should think himself preferable to
another.

They should leave aside all those rites and customs
and be progressive in their pursuits ...

After receiving my *Pahul*

(Baptism of the double-edged broadsword),

men of all four castes should eat from the same
vessel.

(*Twarikh-i-Hind*, p. 377)

12

With the administering of this life-giving *Pahul* (Nectar of the Steel) and assuring of equality, liberty and fraternity to all and sundry, Guru Gobind Singh "turned his disciples, into lions" says Dr. Gokul Chand Narang, "who could dare the lion in his own den and challenge the dreadful Aurangzeb in his own court" (*Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 23)

The inauguration of the Khalsa Panth on the Vaisakhi of 1699 marked, thus, the consummation of the mission ordained to Guru Gobind Singh by God, the Supreme Being, Himself. It also signified the realization of the Guru's 'divinely inspired vision', on the one hand, and

'his design to uplift the people', on the other, who were being trodden and tortured both by the native higher castes and the foreign ruling classes, as stated below under the caption, 'God's utterance', in his autobiography:

ਮੈਂ ਆਪਨਾ ਸੁਤਿ ਤੋਹਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ,
ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ, ਕਰਬੇ ਕਹ ਸਾਜਾ।
ਜਾਹਿ ਤਹਾ ਤੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਚਲਾਇ,
ਕਬੂਧਿ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਲੋਕ ਹਟਾਇ।
(ਦਸਮ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ। ਪੰ. 73)

I have exalted you as My chosen son
and have appointed you to found the Order of
Khalsa.

Go into the world,
promote and spread true religion
And turn the people away
from senseless practices.

(*Dasam Granth Sahib*, p. 73)

13

Moreover, it heralded the making of a novel commonwealth out of the oppressed and downtrodden millions which grew into a nation of God-conscious, self-sacrificing, casteless and classless people, cherishing a "living faith" in God and selfless service of humanity. It also laid the foundation of the system of joint leadership and joint responsibility in a democratic set-up through the institution of the *Panj Pyare* (the Beloved Five) and merger of the Guru's entity with that of his disciples, declaring soon after his own initiation: "Henceforth, the Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is Khalsa (*Surjaj Parkash*, 3.20.6).

The creation of this new Order of Khalsa Panth, under the direct will and command of God, was indeed, "a grand creative deed of history which brought a revolutionary change in men's minds," says Prof. Harbans Singh. "They were rid of the superstitions and divisions which had enfeebled and entombed their spirits for centuries and were given a new conceit of themselves and their destiny. A new impulse of chivalry arose in Northern India which resulted in an endless chain of shining acts of bold sacrifice and gallantry, giving an irrevocable and decisive turn to the course of events" (*Guru Gobind Singh*, p.79) So much so that, according to Dorothy Field,

Of no other religion can it be said that it has made a nation in so short a time. That is should have transformed the outcaste Indian... into a fine and loyal warrior, is little short of a miracle. (*Religion of the Sikhs*, p. 35)

14

The effect of this great miracle of history did not remain confined up to the Guru's own times. It continued with added zeal after him, and is very much evident from the subsequent course of history. Having faced the Khalsa, for instance, in two fierce and bloody Anglo-Sikh Wars, in 1845 and 1848; and also having known them from close quarters, Captain Cunningham, author of their first-ever history in English, observing thus in 1848, about a century and a half after its occurrence in 1699, stated:

The last apostle of the Sikhs (Guru Gobind Singh) did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectively roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lovely longing for social

freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Gobind saw what was yet vital, and he relumed it with Promethean fire.

A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Guru Gobind Singh has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh Chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person, free and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look which marks the fervour of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity...

In religious faith and wordly aspirations, they are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by a community of inward sentiment and of outward objet unknown elsewhere. (*A History of the Sikhs*, pp.75-76)

The inheritors of that "living spirit" have contributed no less, in recent times also, to the fight for the freedom of India from the British yoke and to the strengthening of its unity and solidarity after its independence even at a very heavy cost; as well as to the general welfare of all mankind for whose peace and prosperity the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh supplicates daily, in its personal and congregational prayers, as follows, at home and abroad:

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ
ਤੇਰੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਸਰਬਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ।
(ਸਿਖ ਅਰਦਾਸ, ਅੰਤਮ ਦੋਹਰਾ)

May Your Name, Your Glory, O God
be ever in ascendance!
May the whole humanity
be blessed with peace and prosperity
In Your will, by Your grace!!

(The Sikh Prayer, last couplet)

Therein lies the evidence and significance of such a powerful effect and continuing impact of that incomparable miracle, which was wrought by Guru Gobind Singh, three hundred years ago, at Anandpur Sahib, on the Vaisakhi day of 1699 whose tercentenary we are highly pleased and privileged to celebrate from the 14th of April 1999 to 13th of April 2000.



SECULAR PERCEPTIONS IN SIKH FAITH

— K. S. Duggal

Secularism is defined variously by various people. However, it is certainly not "rejection of all forms of religious faith". As understood by us in secular India, it consists in equal respect for all religions.

Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, was a staunch Hindu and yet he studied and venerated other religions whose hymns were regularly recited at his prayer-meetings. These included Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism. Jawaharlal Nehru professed himself a non-believer and yet he visited places of worship with the apparent devotion of his countrymen. He was invested with the sacred thread as a child and Vedic ceremonials were duly observed at his cremation and after when he was no more.

Sikhism is the most modern, the most recent and the most scientific faith amongst the great religions of the world. Its founder, Guru Nanak, had the advantage of having drunk deep at the founts of all the sacred religious lore. A life-long pilgrim, he visited the ancient Hindu temple at Puri in the east, Holy Mecca in the west, the ascetics at Manasarovar deep into the Himalayas in the north and Buddhist shrines in Sri Lanka. Venerated equally by the Hindus and the Muslims in the Punjab, he is still remembered as *Baba Nanak Shah faqir/Hindu da guru, Musalman da pir*. Guru Nanak's times had the harrowing experience of an invasion of the Punjab by Babar. He indulged in murder and rape and destruction of property most recklessly. The poet in Guru Nanak condemned the barbarities committed by the Mughal

forces, fearlessly. For a moment, it seems, he revolted even against divine justice. Said he -

Aiti mar pai kurlanen!

Tainki dard no aiya?

(Such suffering and such wailing!

Did it not hurt you?) (Asa)

And yet never, never in his voluminous writing did Guru Nanak utter a word against Islam. He decried the Turks and the Pathans who attacked his country but never the Muslims who were as much his countrymen as Hindus and others. On the other hand, while undertaking a pilgrimage to Holy Mecca, he is said to have donned the blue robes of the Muslim pilgrims -

Neel bastar lai kapde pehre

Turk Pathani amal kiya

(He wore the blue robes

The way a Turk or a Pathan does.) (Asa di Var)

Born as a Hindu, communal harmony was a creed with Guru Nanak. All his life he propagated it vigorously.

It is said, when he died, the Hindus wanted to cremate him and the Muslims insisted on burying him. During his lifetime while he visited Hardwar, Varanasi and Puri as a devout Hindu would do, he also went on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina donning the blue garments of a Turk or a Pathan. He made friends with Siddhas - Hindu ascetics - and had prolonged dialogues with them. He also cultivated Muslim divines and mystics and discoursed with them on the ways of man and God. For his constant companions he had Mardana, a Muslim *rabab*-player, and Bala, a Hindu, who is said to be the

author of his earliest biography called *Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala*. He knew Persian and wrote poetry in it. He was equally proficient in Sanskrit and could claim scholarship in the Vedas and the Shastras. His was indeed an integrated personality the like of which it is difficult to imagine.

Even as a child, Guru Nanak started rejecting one after another the superstitious practices, meaningless ceremonials and antiquated rituals current in the society of his day. He annoyed not a few including his own father. He exasperated the Hindu priest and was the despair of the Muslim *maulvi*.

Guru Nanak condemned hypocrisy and ritualism whether he found it in Hinduism or Islam. He believed in clean, honest living with faith in one God. He wanted Hindus to be good Hindus and Muslims to be good Muslims. He insisted that Islam or Hinduism did not consist in its exterior forms and formalism alone.

It is no wonder that well-meaning Hindus and Muslims both held Guru Nanak in great esteem. The Muslims treated him as *Waliallah* - a beloved of God - and until the other day a large number of Hindus of the Punjab had at least one child in the family baptised as a Sikh, following the teachings of Guru Nanak.

The means of communication being what they were during his time, Guru Nanak undertook several journeys to the north, south, east and west with a view to carrying his message of brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God by word of mouth. In the east, he went as far as Nagaland.

On his way back, Guru Nanak returned via Orissa, visiting the famous temple of Jagannath at Puri. It is one of the most important places of Hindu pilgrimage. Guru Nanak found that the priests of the temple attached more importance to rituals than to true faith in God. They made elaborate arrangements to propitiate the deity with trays full of burning candles, flowers, and all sorts of perfumery a number of times a day. They called it *arati*. But none of the devotees joining the ritual had his heart in it. Guru Nanak withdrew from the empty ritual, and, sitting outside the temple, started singing, Mardana accompanying him on the *rabab*:

The sky is the tray,
The sun and the moon are the lights
And stars the jewels.
Sandalwood's fragrance is the incense,
The wind is the fly-whisk
And all the forests your flowers.
What a wonderful *arati* it is!

(Dhanasri)

In the meantime the priests and pilgrims had collected around Guru Nanak and they were thrilled to hear him sing the praises of God.

When Guru Nanak arrived at Mecca, he felt tired. It had been a long and strenuous journey to the holy city. He fell asleep and it so happened that he slept with his feet towards Kaaba, the holy shrine, instead of his head, which was the accepted practice. At midnight Jiwan, the watchman, on his rounds noticed this and was scandalised to find a pilgrim with his feet pointing towards the House of God. 'How dare you lie with your feet pointing towards the House of God?' he shouted. He was about to lay his

corrective hands on Nanak when the Guru woke up. 'My good man, I am weary after a long journey. Kindly turn my feet in the direction where God is not!' Jiwan was stunned. 'Where God is not!' He saw His abode in all the four directions. He had lifted Nanak's feet and rather than turning them around, his head fell on them. He started kissing them. He washed Guru Nanak's feet with his tears.

Unlike Mahavira and Buddha, Nanak was not born to affluent parents. He was the son of a village *patwari*, at the lowest rung of the revenue hierarchy. While playing in the company of children he always made friends with the poor and the so-called low castes. After his Revelation at Sultanpur, to whosoever came to him, his message was simple: One must work and share one's earnings with others and an active life is superior to a contemplative life.

During the close of his ministry, Guru Nanak settled down at Kartarpur, on the banks of the river Ravi. It was a new township established by the Guru himself on a tract of land placed at his disposal by one of his followers. It is said that Kartarpur was the first ever experiment in community living. They tilled the land, Guru Nanak included, and ate from a common kitchen. Khushwant Singh observes in his *History of the Sikhs*:

"The bhaktas had paid only lip service to the ideal of casteless society, Nanak took practical steps to break the vicious hold of caste by starting a free community kitchen – Guru Ka Langar – in all centres and persuading his followers, irrespective of their castes, to eat together."

Guru Nanak identified himself with the lowest of the low. He refers to himself as 'Nanak, the servant', 'Nanak, the low-caste', 'Nanak, the humble'. Integration is best

ensured when the man at the top starts from the bottom.
Says Guru Nanak:

Among the low, let my caste be the lowest.

Of the lowly, let me the lowliest be.

O Nanak, let such be the men I know,

With such men let me keep company.

Why must I try to emulate the great?

Unlike other *bhaktas*, *sufis* and saints, Guru Nanak did not take simplistic view of communal harmony. He did not intend a superficial synthesis of Hinduism and Islam. It was not a case of revaluation, rejecting some and accepting some other features in either faith and then amalgamating them. More than horizontal intermingling which had its own virtues, Guru Nanak laid stress on vertical elevation of society and spiritual coalescing of the two communities. He wanted Hindus to be good Hindus and Muslims to be good Muslims. Wherever he went, he set up *manjis*, where his followers could congregate regularly, both Hindus and Muslims, and remember God.

Guru Nanak had also rejected Sanskrit and Persian for communication. He opted for the language of the people with a fair dose of local dialects. Adoption of their language brought him closer to the people. Propagation of the mother-tongue obliterated differences in the various communities and provided them with a common platform. A common language can be a mighty cementing force. The Hindus were drifting away to Sanskrit and the Muslims were taking to Persian more and more. *Bhaktas* like Guru Nanak helped stem this tendency. The gulf was bridged to a great extent. The protagonists of the Bhakti Movement

evolved a link language called *sadhukari*, spoken and popularised by the saint-poets in medieval times.

Not only this, Guru Nanak adopted poetic forms that were popular with the people at large. Their metres and measures followed the folksongs and folk ballads that the common people were familiar with. Guru Nanak tried *Siharfi*, *Baramah*, *Kafi* and several other moulds popular with Muslims as also *Chhanda*, *Ashtapadi*, *Doha* and *Sloka* in the best tradition of Hindu classical poetry.

He drew his similes from the everyday life of the common man. He employed familiar symbols like the spinning-wheel, the bride and the parent's house, etc. etc., though with a freshness of approach.

Since it is easy to remember poetry, easier to convey it by word of mouth, all his writings that Guru Nanak has bequeathed to his followers are in verse. Not only this, almost all his poetry can be sung to music. The text conforms to specific *ragas* prevalent in the Hindustani style of music of the day. Where Guru Nanak followed better-known musical forms of folk ballads, he made it a point to mention the fact in the beginning of the composition that it was designed to be sung in such and such tune in the style of such and such ballad. For instance, in the opening of *Asa di Var*, a long work sung by the Sikh community every morning as a divine service, it is stated:

"The *Var* with *slokas* is written by the first Guru should be sung to the air of *Tunda Asraja*."

Guru Nanak combined in himself a recluse, an ascetic and a family man who married and had children.



He was the fond brother of a sister. He was a dutiful husband. He was a loving father. And yet he was unduly attached to none. When the time came to nominate his successor, Guru Nanak felt that neither of his sons qualified for the honour. Here was the greatest test of his life. His sons aspired to succeed him. One of them had never married and lived the life of an ascetic. Guru Nanak did not approve of it. He attached greater importance to normal family life. He, therefore, ordained one of his followers, who had come to stay with him, as the next Guru. Lehna by name, he was blessed by Nanak with his *ang* (hand) and he became Guru Angad.

Guru Angad the Second Guru was fond of children and took great interest in them. He collected children, organised games for them, and distributed prizes. He devoted equal attention to their proper education. He insisted that children should be taught in their mother-tongue and to that end he is said to have simplified and codified the Gurmukhi script, and popularised its use amongst the Sikhs. This, perhaps, is the most important contribution of Guru Angad.

When the time came for Guru Angad to name his successor, he installed Guru Amar Das, one of his devotees, as the next Guru. Guru Angad's two sons didn't like the decision. They had their own ambitions. Guru Angad told them that the honour must go to the one who deserved it most.

Guru Amar Das the third Sikh Guru's most distinguished contribution was the concept of *pangat*. The Sikhs must sit and eat together. He set up a free kitchen where everyone, irrespective of caste and creed, was

welcome. In fact, the Guru made it obligatory on all those seeking his audience first to eat in the *langar* and then go to see him. This helped in ridding Hindu society of the evil of the caste system and brought the Hindus and the Muslims closer and fostered communal harmony.

The Guru also tried to eradicate social evils like *Sati*, which required a Hindu widow to burn herself on her husband's funeral pyre, or the widow remaining unmarried for the rest of her life after the death of her husband.

Guru Ram Das succeeded as the fourth Sikh Guru of the Sikhs. Guru Ram Das's ministry was short-lived, a period of seven years only. After he had been ordained as the Guru, Guru Ram Das who was the son-in-law of Guru Amar Das started building a new township on the *jagir* gifted to his wife Bibi Bhani by Akbar. This new township is what came to be known as Amritsar. Guru Ram Das wanted to provide the community with a nucleus, but he could neither complete the holy tank nor start constructing the Golden Temple on its present site because he left this world rather early in life, handing over the stewardship of the community to his youngest son Guru Arjan Dev, a sensitive poet and scholar of eminence.

Guru Arjan the forth Sikh Guru had the foundation-stone of *Harimandir*, later known as the Golden Temple, laid by Mian Mir, a Muslim divine of Lahore. The Sikhs desired that it should be the tallest building in town. The Guru, however, thought otherwise. He reminded his followers that there was no virtue like humility. The temple was, therefore, built on as low an elevation as possible. He also decided to have the new temple open on

all four sides. Anyone could enter it from any side. No one might be discriminated against.

As he was busy looking after the construction of the Holy Tank and the Holy Temple, reports came to Guru Arjan that Prithi Chand, his eldest brother, had started composing his own hymns and was passing them to the Sikhs visiting Amritsar as the compositions of Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus. If this was allowed, Guru Arjan feared it would be the undoing of the faith. He therefore, decided to compile the authentic texts of hymns of the four Gurus preceding him along with his own. The compilation when completed came to be known as the *Holy Granth*.

However, Prithi Chand complained to the Mughal Court that the *Holy Granth* had derogatory references to Muslim and Hindu prophets and saints. Akbar had it looked into and found that there was no truth in it. He was delighted to be acquainted with the highly inspiring volume compiled by the Guru.

Unfortunately, a monarch of vision like Akbar did not live long. He was followed by his son Jehangir on the throne. Jehangir was pleasure-loving. He was given to drinking. He left the administration of the Kingdom to his Queen and his courtiers. While on his way to Kashmir, the Emperor summoned Guru Arjan to meet him at Lahore. He asked the Guru to revise the *Holy Granth* deleting all references to Islam and Hinduism figuring in it. How could the Guru agree to it?

In the meanwhile, the *qazi* gave his injunction ordering the Guru to be tortured to death, in case he did not agree to expunge the so-called derogatory references to Islam and Hinduism in the *Holy Granth*.

With Guru Arjan's martyrdom, the attitude of Sikhs to life changed. Emulating their Guru, they would readily give their lives for any cause dear to them, whether it was for the protection of their faith, freedom of the country or the integrity of the motherland.

In Guru Arjan we have the culmination of all that Guru Nanak and the three Gurus following him stood for. They combined in themselves the best of Islam and the best of Hinduism. Rather than alienating anyone, they strove for mutual understanding. Venerated equally by the Muslims and the Hindus, they were peace-loving, devoted to meditation and prayers and service of their fellow-beings.

Guru Arjan's martyrdom precipitated the issue. It gave a new complexion to the shape of things in the Punjab and the Sikh polity. While Guru Arjan's non-violence and the way he made the supreme sacrifice reflect the best in Guru Nanak, the training he gave to his successor, Hargobind, was a sign-post of a long drawn-out conflict that followed, culminating in a momentous turbulence during Guru Gobind Singh's life and times.

Accepting the will of God, Guru Arjan gave up his life, suffering inhuman atrocities in a non-violent manner. Yet the last message he sent to his son was to arm himself fully and prepare for the struggle ahead which was to be a long drawn-out war against evil and tyranny. It steeled the heart of the youthful Hargobind, who succeeded his father as the sixth Sikh Guru.

It is said, when Bhai Budha, the grand old man of the Sikh brotherhood, brought him *seli*, the sacred headgear of renunciation that Guru Nanak had worn and

had bequeathed to his successors one after another, Guru Hargobind put it aside respectfully and asked for a sword instead. Bhai Budha who had never handled a sword brought out one and put it on the wrong side. The Guru noticed it and asked for another. 'I'll wear two swords,' said the Guru, 'a sword of *Shakti* (power) and a sword of *bhakti* (meditation).'

Guru Hargobind combined in him *piri* (renunciation) and *miri* (royalty). Henceforth the Guru's Sikhs were to carry arms and ride horses. It gave birth to a new concept of the saint-soldier.

No more did the Sikhs believe in self-denial alone, they grew increasingly aware of the need for self-assertion also. No more self-abnegation and renunciation alone, they wielded arms and lived an active life. They wouldn't frighten anyone, nor were they afraid of anybody. They reared horses, rode on them and racing and hunting became their pastime. The Guru maintained a regular army with various cadres. The heroic youth joined him in large numbers, irrespective of caste and creed. The Sikhs all over presented the Guru with best horses and finest weapons as their offerings. The Guru built forts and battlements, donned a royal aigrette and was known as *Sacha Padshah*, the True King.

Guru Hargobind's greatest contribution is that he gave a new turn to the Sikh way of life. He turned saints into soldiers and yet remained a man of God. He believed that non-violence is cowardice if it is resorted to out of helplessness or fear. It is the brave and heroic who can be non-violent. Essentially a spiritual leader of community hardly a hundred years old, he fought a number of battles

with the Imperial forces and every time vanquished his foe because the truth was always on his side. It was always a fight in self-defence and never a war of aggression. This new trend that he gave to Sikh polity found its finest expression in his grandson Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru.

Guru Har Rai was just 14 years old when he became the seventh Sikh Guru. When Shah Jehan heard about Guru Har Rai's succession, he too realised that it was best to make friends with the heroic and self-respecting community. Accordingly, when his son Dara Shikoh fell seriously ill, he approached the Guru for his blessings and the young prince is said to have been cured with a herb Guru Har Rai sent to Delhi.

But this amity with the Delhi Darbar was short-lived. Aurangzeb, the third son of King Shah Jehan, usurped the throne and chased Dara Shikoh, his eldest brother away. While in flight, Dara Shikoh met Guru Har Rai. According to the tradition of the Guru's household, Guru Har Rai received the prince with due courtesy and gave him all the help that he needed.

After Aurangzeb was firmly settled on the Mughal throne, he turned his attention to the Sikhs. An excuse was readily available. The Guru had met Dara Shikoh, an enemy of the King, and blessed him.

Guru Har Rai passed away at the early age of 30 in 1661. But just before his death, he had his second son Harkrishan ordained as the Guru. The stewardship of Guru Har Rai, the Seventh Sikh Guru and Guru Harkrishan, the Eighth Sikh Guru was a sort of interregnum in the life of the Sikh community before it set on a new path of no compromise with injustice and evil.

Guru Tegh Bahadur who succeeded Guru Har Krishan was essentially contemplative by temperament. But the conditions in the Punjab and the rest of the country were such as would not allow him peace.

Though God-fearing and pious, Aurangzeb honestly believed that Hinduism was utterly misconceived, decadent and idolatrous. It was for their good if he could rid his people of superstitious and anti-God practices and thereby have the gates of heaven flung open to them.

He, therefore, decided to turn the country into Dar-ul-Islam, the abode of Muslims and issued instructions to his Governors to launch a mass conversion drive of Hindus.

In Kashmir, the Governor realised that Hindus had started fleeing his province. In this way, he felt, he would be left with hardly anyone to rule over. He, therefore, invited the leading brahmins of the community for a dialogue. He explained to them his helplessness in view of the firm orders from Delhi. After protracted discussion it was decided that the Hindu community should be given six months to make up its mind.

Kashmiri brahmins immediately left for the Punjab. They lost no time in explaining their predicament to the Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru heard their tale of woe and was lost in deep contemplation when Gobind, his young son walked in. 'What is bothering you, dear father?' he asked. The Guru explained to him the situation. 'They can be saved only if a great soul can offer himself for martyrdom.' 'Then who is greater than you?' remarked the future saint-soldier of the Sikhs. The father was assured that Gobind was ready to take over. He advised the

visiting supplicators to go back and inform their tormentors that they would be willing to accept Islam if Guru Tegh Bahadur could first be persuaded to do so.

The Guru was summoned to Delhi and put in jail. 'If you are a man of God, you must work a miracle,' the King said. The Guru would not purchase his release the way a juggler earned his living. Then the inevitable took place. The *qazi* gave his fatwa. And the Guru was executed. Thus, while Guru Nanak refused to wear the sacred thread, Guru Tegh Bahadur gave his life, so that the right of a community to wear the sacred thread and practise its faith was protected. This makes Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom unique in history. People gave their lives for principles dear to them, ideals cherished by them and faiths they held. There is hardly anyone who had staked his life for other people's faith. The supreme sacrifice made by Guru Tegh Bahadur stemmed the tide of intolerance in the sub-continent and inculcated in the people respect for other religions.

A soldier of destiny, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru started consolidating his resources and preparing himself and his people for the gruesome fight until the poison that had permeated the body politic of the country had been completely rooted out. Guru Gobind realised the need to give the new religion a distinct identity. Islam under rulers like Aurangzeb had become rigid, narrow-minded and uncompromising and Hinduism had been enfeebled by ritualism.

The Guru practised archery, went out on *shikar* and played mock battles with his companions. He had a huge drum made and collected his people, whenever he required them, by beat of drum.

The Guru also devoted himself to research, literary and artistic activity. He had 52 eminent poets working with him; poetic symposia were held frequently. The Guru, who was a scholar in Sanskrit and Persian, participated in them. His writings are a clear break with the tradition of his predecessors. He wrote powerful verse which is replete with images of war and warriors from ancient mythology and folklore. He worshipped God; he also had an unmistakable love of the sword.

For the Baisakhi fair in 1699, the Guru issued a general invitation to his Sikhs throughout the length and breadth of the country to visit Anandpur. He advised the Sikhs to come with unshorn hair. Several thousand Sikhs came to participate in the fair in response to the Guru's call.

On the morning of the main Fair day after the hymn-singing had concluded, the Guru appeared on the dais with an unsheathed sword dazzling in his hand and asked the audience – 'My sword is thirsty. It needs the blood of a Sikh to quench its thirst. Is there anyone in the audience who is willing to offer his head?' There was consternation amongst those present.

'Is there no one who is willing to present his head to satisfy my sword?' the Guru repeated.

The gathering grew more uneasy. 'Do I understand that there is none amongst my Sikhs who is willing to sacrifice his life for his Guru?' As the Guru repeated his call the third time, a Sikh called Daya Ram, a Khatri from Lahore of about 30 years of age, rose from the crowd to offer his head. 'It's yours in life and death,' said the Sikh humbly. The Guru caught hold of him by his arm and led

him to a tent pitched adjacent to the dais. There was a thud of the sword.

A moment later the Guru appeared, with his sword dripping with blood. 'I want another head,' shouted the Guru. There was panic in the audience. They even doubted if their leader was sane at all. Still before the Guru could repeat his call, another Sikh, this time a Jat from Haryana, rose and placed his head at the disposal of his Master. The Guru pulled him into the tent, in a strange frenzy. Again there was the thud of the sword followed by a stream of blood flowing out of the tent. And as before, the Guru came out of the tent with blood dripping from his sharpened sword.

'I want another head, the third.' He stood glowing with fiery eyes. Even at his first call, Mohkam Chand, a Sikh from far-off Dwarka, hurried to the scaffolding, apologising for his not offering himself earlier. The same frightful thud of the sword followed; and the red blood squirted out of the sacrificial tent. The thirst of the Guru's sword was still not quenched. He came out the fourth time demanding yet another head. The blade of his sword was stained with blood. Some people from the hysterical crowd started running away. 'I want the fourth head.' The Guru looked around and before he finished making this call, Himmat Chand, who had come all the way from Jagannathpuri in Orissa, rushed to the Guru. His head was at his Master's disposal. Like the other three Sikhs, he was also led to the tent. The thud of the sword was repeated and the stream of blood flowing from the tent was augmented with fresh blood. With blood dripping once again, the Guru asked for yet another head. By now the gathering had thinned considerably. Sahib Chand of Bidar,

this time, rushed to the dais and fell at the Guru's feet for not responding to his call all the while. The Guru led the fifth Sikh also into the tent. Terror-stricken, some Sikhs ran to inform the Guru's mother, others thought of seeking the intervention of the Guru's senior advisers. They had gathered to celebrate the festival of Baisakhi and here the Guru had started butchering them. They were on the horns of a dilemma. They did not know what to do, when suddenly from behind the tent, they saw the five faithful Sikhs emerge one after another, radiant and beaming, like five resplendent stars descended from heaven! They were followed by the Guru glowing with a new confidence. The audience burst into spontaneous joy. They hailed the Guru with slogans – 'The Guru is great!' 'Long live the Guru!' 'Glory to the Guru!' Shouting such slogans they were going crazy when the Guru raised his hand and silenced them. 'Great are the Five Faithfuls! Glory to them! They are the chosen ones. They have found immortality. Those who know how to die, only they win deliverance from the cycle of life and death,' said the Guru.

The Guru, it is said, had slaughtered only goats. Every time he took a Sikh inside the tent, he slaughtered a goat and came out with its blood dripping from the blade of his sword.

The Guru, then, had a steel vessel brought and poured water into it. The five Faithful Sikhs were asked to recite hymns from the sacred scriptures turn by turn, while the Guru stirred the water with a double-edged dagger called *khanda*. The Guru was preparing *amrit*-nectar to baptise Guru Nanak's Sikhs, to turn them into Khalsa – the elect. As the Five Faithful Sikhs were reciting the Holy Word clad in their blue robes of divine

angels, Mata Sahib Devan came with *patashas* – sugarcandy – by way of her offering. The Guru was most happy. 'It is a timely gift,' he said and taking the *patashas* put them into the vessel. 'It is marrying valour to compassion,' said the Guru. 'The dagger was to turn the Sikh into heroes, the sugarcandy will foster in them the milk of human kindness.'

When the recitation from the pre-determined text of the scriptures was over, the Guru baptised the five beloved faithfuls with the nectar, the draught of immortality and knowledge sublime.

After the Sikhs had been thus baptised the Guru himself stood before them with hands folded and prayed to the Five Faithfuls to baptise him in return. Thus the Guru turned himself into a disciple. It was for the first time in the annals of history that the Master sat at the feet of his disciples asking them to be blessed with a draught of nectar. The moment he had the sublime sip, he became Guru Gobind Singh from Guru Gobind Rai. So were the Five Faithful Sikhs and thousands of the Guru's devotees who had gathered at Anandpur. According to the report of a diarist of the Mughal court to the Emperor in Delhi, 20,000 Sikhs were anointed on that blessed Baisakhi day. This was the birth of the Khalsa, the reincarnation of Guru Nanak's Sikhs. A draught of *amrit* and every Sikh became a Singh, a lion. Everyone had to sip *amrit* from a common vessel, thereby joining them in eternal brotherhood and casting away the barriers of caste and creed.

The Sikhs who adopt the prescribed way of life are as good as the Guru. The Guru is the Khalsa and the Khalsa is the Guru.

After the grand baptism, the Guru declared that all his Sikhs were to be known as Singhs (lions). The baptism had turned jackals into tigers. The Khalsa must fight oppression. It is maintained that having been anointed with *amrit*, a single Sikh could fight a lakh and a quarter enemies.

And indeed the Sikhs did do this miracle. They fought fourteen times against the well disciplined imperial army – fourteen pitched battles – and not less than twelve times they defeated the enemy, made him withdraw, miserably mauled and routed.

Fighting against evil and injustice, Guru Gobind Singh suffered grievous losses personally. His father was martyred. His mother died in captivity. Two of his sons met their end one after another fighting single-handed against odds. Their father watched them from a battlement besieged by a rabid host. His two younger sons were walled in alive. Hundreds of his loyal lieutenants and thousands of his faithful followers gave their lives fighting for their guru. His prize horses and precious manuscripts were lost. There came a time when he was left all alone. Without a horse. Without any arms. With no attendant. Having wandered through hostile jungle, his clothes were torn. Walking day and night, his shoes were worn out. With thorns pricking his feet, lonely and forlorn, it is said, he reached Machhiwada jungle. He lay down on the bare earth with a stone for his pillow. It was here that he sang what now is regarded as one of his most famous hymns:

Go tell the plight of His devotees to my beloved Lord.
The luxury of soft beds is agony without Him;
It's like living in a snake-pit,

The goblet is poison and the cup a dagger,
Life is like receiving a butcher's punches.
I would rather live in hiding, with my beloved.
It's hell living with strangers without Him.

It was at Damdama Saheb that the Guru's consort joined him after the battle. It is said that when she arrived, the Guru was in a congregation.

'Where are my children, my four darling sons?' the bereaved mother cried in agony.

'Here are thousands of them-all your children.' the Guru told her, pointing to the congregation.

With the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh, the tradition of the living Guru came to an end. The *Holy Granth* was consecrated as the Guru. Those who looked for His blessings found them in the Book.

The Sikhs came to give the same esteem, the same veneration to the *Holy Granth* as to the living Guru. They prostrate before it the first thing every morning, make offerings of all sorts and seek guidance from the Scripture by reading, reciting and singing hymns.

Its text does not belong to the Sikh Gurus alone. The Holy Granth has, aside from the hymns of the Sikh Gurus, compositions of 36 men of God belonging to the various castes and creeds, religions and avocations. Among them are Jaidev of Bengal, Surdas of Awadh, Namdev, Trilochan and Parmanand of Maharashtra, Beni, Ramanand, Pipa, Sain, Kabir, Ravidas, and Bhikan of Uttar Pradesh, Dhanna of Rajasthan and Farid of Multan in the Punjab. Not only this, some of them belonged to the so-called lowest of the low castes. Kabir was a weaver,

Sadhna a butcher, Namdev a tailor, Sain a barber and Ravidas a tanner. The compiler of the Holy Granth did not allow communal or social distinctions to come in his way. Dhanna was a Jat, while Pipa was a king. Farid was a Muslim divine and Bhikka a learned scholar of Islam, while Jaidev was a Hindu mystic and poet.

Thus when a Sikh bows before and seeks guidance from the Holy Granth, he offers his devotion as much to Farid, the renowned Muslim saint, and Jaidev, a Hindu *bhakta* of Krishna, as to Guru Nanak or Guru Arjan, the compiler of the Granth. It is a commonwealth of the men of God.

G.H. Holyoake who devised the term "Secularism" in 1851 defined it as a "way of thinking" concerned with the "issues that can be tested in life." As such the lives and teachings of the Sikh Gurus remain secular in all respects.

INSTITUTION - CONCEPT CLARIFIED

— Jaspal Singh

Let us try to understand what an institution is by distinguishing it from what it is not. It is different from a clan, a clique, a crowd, an organisation, or an association.

An institution is not *clan*. A clan exercises control exclusively on those of the same kind included in this category. They cultivate family-type relations with one another. They help each other for recognising realities and coming to terms with problems. A person in the centre nurtures his clansmen and helps them in time of their need. He thwarts competition and keeps a balance within. The members of his clan bask in his glory. He corners a large chunk of the available cake for himself. In USA, Chinese are reputed for being clanish, while South Italians have many cliques (mafia). In Punjab, Kambohas are reputed for being clanish, while Jats have many cliques (factions).

Similarly, an institution is not a *clique*. The primars concern of members of a clique is to maximise their own benefits at the cost of others around them. They raise their nuisance value by throwing spanners in the spokes, thus making the possible impossible, lest those who cannot go all the way with them should get away with what they want. Thus, cliques define success not only in terms of getting coveted rewards for themselves, but also preventing others from doing so. Informal groups of supporters like gang, coterie, caucus and faction, are variants of this concept.

An institution is not a crowd. Institutionalisation is different from *mobilisation*. This is an *ad hoc* way of dealing with situations as and when these arise. Mahatma Gandhi mobilised crowds in India in favour of the national freedom movement. Political organisation in India is basically mass mobilisation in the name of anything that works for the time being.

Organisation is a rational-legal mode of regulation for continuously utilising the willing cooperation of formally free labour. The goals of an institution are diffused, while an organisation aims at attaining limited objectives with the available resources. The ends are laid down by those owning/controlling the organisation. Strategy and tactics for achieving these goals are rational. Its actions are individual, instrumental and utilitarian. Versatile, vigorous and far-sighted visionaries, who want to achieve certain goals, even if their followers are foolish and mean, build up carefully recruited teams to put in concerted efforts. Institutionalisation of proper way of doing things makes people capable of acting together in organisations. Jamshed ji Tata organised TISCO for manufacturing steel in India.

As institution is also different from an *association*. An association is located somewhere. But an institution has no location. For example, Gurdwara is an association while maryada is an institution. Khalsa College is an association, while education is an institution.

What are institutions? These are regular, recognised and enduring ways of getting things done. These emerge, become stable and get entrenched during the course of social interaction. Events are transformed into precedents. When precedents are followed repeatedly, these become

institutions. Member of an institution occupies a status. He is expected to perform a concomitant role. For this purpose, he is oriented to come into contact with others and interacting with them with a view to building social relations. Members of an institution possess common identity, values and symbols. Validity of an institution promotes internalisation of norms and regularities of social action. With growth in the volume and density of social life, complexity of institutions goes up. Institutions exercise external constraint on individuals to behave in given ways.

Deviation from institutions leads to application of sanctions. De-institutionalisation creates gaps beyond the extent of normal pathology. Over-institutionalisation becomes a source of surplus repression. When thieves have to conceal from others while stealing, they are recognising the validity of an institution. If some people go on arrogantly asserting that they can do anything to anybody, and can get away with it, then proper ways of thinking, feeling and acting have not been institutionalised. Social life is intolerable and impossible without institutionalisation of good manners in word and deed. If they can do it to others today, others can do it to them tomorrow. Thus life becomes nasty, poor, brutish and short. Institutions facilitate social control, while retarding social change.

Apart from a set of institutions and their linkages, total social phenomenon includes society (network of social relationships) as well as culture (accumulated knowledge of art, beliefs, graces, habits, languages, norms and values, rituals, skills, sports, technology, etc.). Guru-chela relationship is an element of society. Chela removing price-tag from the daswandh given by him to his Guru is an institution. Sumat given by a Guru to his chela is culture.

The total social phenomenon is undergoing rapid social change. loyalties are shifting and boundaries are contested. Lag between d-institutionalisation and re-institutiolisation adversely affects our inclination to do what we ought to do. This makes it difficult to live well in a milieu with broader social boundaries.

It is time to bring together the red threads from the foregoing discussion. In common parlance, the term is put to use in vague sort of way. Various sociologists define it in terms of :-

- (1) Persons as embodiments of office or functions
(Brahm giani, Sant, Yogi).
- (2) Organised social systems
(SGPC, Guru Nanak Foundation, Miri Piri Academy).
- (3) A consolidated complex of specified role expectations within a social system (Sikhi, Sangat, Pangat, Dan).
- (4) Persistent social norms, principles, regulations, elementary rules, instructions (Nam japna, Kirt karni, Wand chhakna).
- (5) More or less stable forms or established procedures of thinking, feeling and acting. Proper ways of doing things (Rahit maryada, Child rearing, System of examinations, Account keeping).

In any meaningful discourse, we have to define our terms. However, knowledge is exploding with bangs these days. Many interstitial spaces are left out between the objective, subjective and conventional intensions of terms. Linguistic use of our definitions and concepts is neither fixed nor sacrosanct. It cannot be settled for ever afterwards!

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GURU AMAR DAS

Manohar Singh Batra

The third Guru, Sri Guru Amar Das was born in the village Basarke, near Amritsar on May 5, 1479 AD. He was the eldest of four sons of Baba Tej Bhan and mother, Sulakhni, a highly pious and sweet-natured couple. The child, Amar Das was imparted varied education in letters as well as spiritual matters and from the very beginning he started acquiring a meditative mind. He inherited a pious disposition from his parents, who believed in pilgrimages of holy places, fasting and other rituals. He looked upon giving away alms and succour to mendicants and needy persons as a great virtue. Even his marriage to Bibi Mansa Devi, also known as Ram Kaur, did not dampen his enthusiasm in devoting time to pious activities. He spent a good deal of time in the study of religious literature and in the company of holy men. He was looked upon with great reverence by the people of the area, who were deeply impressed by his cool temperament, exceptionally noble qualities and innate humility. He was so much taken in by a desire to participate in the common weal, that finding a need for access to water of the local populace, he arranged a well and a pond to be dug in the Basarke village.

With the passage of time, while pursuring his duties as a house holder and a dutiful son, he continued with his spiritual interests and he decided to go on an annual pilgrimage to Hardwar for bathing in the Ganges. Conincidentally in the same year, Babar had invaded Saidpur (Aimanabad) and razed the city prompting Sri

Guru Nanak Dev to compose hymns portraying the excesses and barbarities perpetrated on the hapless people. Though there were lots of hazards in journeys during those days, Sri (Guru) Amar Das, unmindful of risks and difficulties involved, was always prepared to brave the perils and go on travels alone. Lawlessness was rampant and nobody's life and property were safe. But the intrepid soul had begun to visit Hardwar twice every year by now.

In 1533 when Baba Tej Bhan breathed his last, as per tradition Guru Amar Das went to Haridwar for immersion of his fathers mortal remains in the Ganges. On his return journey, he come across a holy man by the name of Hari, who was conversant with the sarredred compositions of Sri Guru Nanak Dev. When he started reciting those compositions with devotion, the mind of Sri (Guru) Amar Das was filled with a strange happiness. He became aware of an intense desire to go and pay obeisance to the great author of those hymns. That was the time when Bhai Lehna ji, who, later succeeded to Sri Guru Nanak Dev as the second Master, had, after eschewing the worship of the goddess, reached Kartarpur and dedicated his entire self to the teachings of the holy Preceptor.

In September 1539, when the soul of Sri Guru Nanak Dev mingled with the Eternal Light, Bhai Lehna ji took the reins of the faith in his hands and moved from Kartarpur to Khadoor Sahib to preach the holy word of his predecessor and to spread the message of the supremacy of God and the fraternity of mankind. Sri (Guru) Amar Das was continuing with his frequent pilgrimages to Hardwar. In 1541, while he was returning from one such trip, he met a Brahamchari saint, with

whom he developed friendly relations and they started sharing food cooked by each other. As the saint was highly impressed by cleanliness and piety of Sri (Guru) Amar Das, the former asked him the name of his Guru, under whose tutelage and guidance he had acquired such godly qualities. When Sri (Guru) Amar Das told him that he had not yet found a true Teacher, from whom he could receive spiritual instruction and right direction, the mendicant took umbrage blaming himself of having such close relations with a Guru-less man. He left Sri (Guru) Amar Das instantly, saying that he would have to go for another dip in the Ganga to atone for the sin of having a rapport with a person who did not have a Guru.

This left Sri (Guru) Amar Das athinking and wondering how he could come into contact with a Divine Teacher, who would be so accomplished as to provide solace to his thirsty soul and fill the spiritual void he was suffering from. One day in the ambrosial hours, while he was returning from bath in the river he overheard a sacred hymn being sweetly sung by Bibi Amro, his nephew's wife, who was the daughter of Sri Guru Angad Dev, the second Guru. That was a turning point in his life. He beseeched Bibi Amro to accompany him to Khador Sahib, the abode of Sri Guru Angad Dev, from whom he could receive spiritual solace. He was 62, whereas the age of the second Master was just 36. As he came to the presence of the Guru, the latter got up from his seat to accord him respect due to the uncle of his son-in-law. But Sri (Guru) Amar Das bowed to him in reverence saying that he had not come as a relative, but as a supplicant for his grace.

Sri (Guru) Amar Das spent eleven years from 1541 to 1552 in the service of Sri Guru Angad Dev. One of the

duties he took upon himself was to go to the Bias river before dawn every morning to fetch water for the bath of his holy Master. He would then arrange wood to cook food in the Guru's community kitchen (Langar), serve food to the visitors, clean the utensils and wield the hand-fan for the comfort of the congregation. His dedication to the house of Guru Nanak was unstinted and complete. He ignored all attempts by his relatives to wean him away from the Guru and to return to his own village, Basarke, and he remained steadfast and true to his belief.

Sri Guru Angad Dev decided to appoint Sri (Guru) Amar Das as his successor for carrying forward the mission of Sri Guru Nanak Dev, in preference to his two sons, Dasu and Datu. When the Guru felt that his time to leave this world had come, he called his followers and told them to accept Amar Das as their next Guru. The latter was bathed in water fetched from the Bias river, attired in new clothes and was applied Tilak by Sri Guru Angad Dev himself as a token of having been assigned the holy task of the Third Guru of the Sikh community. He inherited the same light from Sri Guru Angad Dev, that the latter had been blessed with by Guru Nanak. The second Guru breathed his last at Khadoor Sahib on March 29, 1552.

Sri Guru Amar Das was a great reformer. He preached absolute equality among all men and women. He ordained that whosoever wanted to have communion with him, must partake of food in the community kitchen (Langar), where people from all communities and castes were served sitting in one row without any distinction of rich and poor, high and low. That was the Guru's way of

levelling everybody as human beings without ego and pride. Even as Emperor Akbar went to meet the Guru at Goindwel, where he had shifted as per the wishes of Sri Guru Angad Dev, he had to take food in the Langar before being ushered in the presence of the Guru. The Guru was firmly of the view that nobody was superior or inferior because of his birth. It was the conduct that bestowed the appropriate status on human beings. The egalitarian teachings of the Guru attracted a large number of Hindus and Muslims to come into the Sikh fold. There was no element of allurement or coercion. It was the philosophy and teachings of the house of Guru Nanak that brought many people into the congregation. A Muslim devotee, Allah Yar was later appointed as a viceregent.

Sri Guru Amar Das considered the purdah (veil) system for women as a sign of inequality between the two sexes and virtual slavery. The system was degrading to the fair sex and deprived them of their natural rights. The system had become prevalent in the Hindu society in the wake of the Muslim invasions of India. The Guru announced that imposition of Purdah on women prevented the development of their physical health and mental faculties. He, therefore, ordained that all women in Sikh congregations would not cover their faces under veil and were free to join in the singing of the praises of the Almighty God, along with men as their equals.

Guru Amar Das expressed himself emphatically against the system of sati, when women were forced or persuaded to mount the funeral pyre of their dead husbands and to burn themselves alive. There could not be a crime more heinous and a custom so cruel and

degrading than this. The Guru believed in complete human equality, equity and justice for all. Under his influence the Sati system virtually came to an end in the northern parts of the country.

The Guru's philanthropic disposition bore fruit in many ways. As the high caste Hindus did not allow the members of the so-called low castes to mingle with them, manifested by their refusal to allow the outcastes to draw water from or to take bath near the wells, the Guru ordered a well (Bawali) to be dug up at Goindwal with 84 steps and enjoined that whosoever will bathe in it and recite at each step Jap Ji, the first composition by Sri Guru Nanak Dev, his transmigration would end. The belief is still firmly held by the devout and large crowds make a pilgrimage to Goindwal Sahib to emancipation from the cycle of births and deaths. Not able to tolerate the glory of the faith and the fathomless devotion of the people of all castes and creeds, the high-caste Khattris and Brahmins of the neighbourhood went to wait upon Akbar in a deputation to complain against the Guru for corrupting their age-old traditions and religious beliefs. The Emperor did not accept their plea, as he was convinced of the holiness of the Guru's mission and admired him for his godliness. When the Guru sent Jetha to the court of Akbar to answer the charges levelled against the house of Guru Nanak, the Emperor received him with great courtesy and was deeply impressed by Jetha's reasoning. Akbar was told that those who exploited ignorant people with superstitions were committing sacrilege against God and man. True religion did not lie in condemning mass of human beings, including women, to a sub-human level. Propagating

superstition or totems to impressionable minds as against the worship of one Creator gave no credit to priests and preachers. The Emperor was overwhelmed by this exposition of the Sikh faith.

Sri Guru Amar Das undertook a tour of all Hindu places of pilgrimage (as recorded by Jetha, who was later anointed as Guru Ram Das) to instruct and emancipate the people at large. The Adi Granth declares that those who saw the Guru, their ignorance was dispelled and light dawned on their hearts. The Guru preached that all Smritis and Shastras were full of praises of one God. Guru Nanak's word guided human beings to the service of the Lord.

While the visitors, pilgrims and Sikhs were served rich meals from the Langar (Guru's kitchen), the Guru himself lived on coarse bread. He maintained that the Guru's kitchen was for the poor and the needy, the pilgrims and the visitors and he had no right to appropriate to himself anything more than what was necessary to keep his body and soul together. Everyone should abandon avarice, greed, lust, pride and anger. One must maintain his mental equipoise and share the joys and sorrows of others. One should serve his fellowbeings with faith and total humility.

The Guru left this mortal world in 1574 AD and before breathing his last he appointed Jetha his successor and renamed him Ram Das in preference to his sons, Mohri and Mohan.

BHAKTI MOVEMENT—IT'S IMPACT ON THE SIKH SPIRITUAL TRADITION

— LOCHAN SINGH BAKSHI

The encyclopaedic definition of Bhakti is : strong attachment or affection, worship, prayer and quality or condition of being devoted. Another definition is : "To give or apply oneself completely to a purpose, activity, or to another person". Hence love and dedication is the basic requirement of Bhakti, which has been defined by Swami Vivekananda as "A series of succession of mental efforts at religious realisation beginning with ordinary worship and ending in supreme intensity of love for Ishwara".³

According to the mystics, devotion is a means and an end in itself. It starts with *Ishq-Majazi* and ends with *Ishq-Haquiqui*. The ideal before the *bhakta* is the merger with the Supreme Being or union with the eternal Soul. When yearning ends up in the ultimate, and everlasting peace takes over, it is at this stage that *Sadhak* and *Sadhya* become one. The Sufis call this stage as *Fanah-Fillah*. Gurbani calls it 'Parmanand' when the *Atma* rests in *Sach Khand* — 'realm of pure bliss'.

The Hindu philosophy has defined values of life in four categories and call them *Purshartha*. These are : *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. Sant Jnaneshwara has added Bhakti as the fifth value of life.⁴ According to him Bhakti has the highest value and is preferable to *moksha*. It is the goal and final fulfilment of life for a *Sadhak*, but the Guru poets have not desired for *Mukti*. "I desire not kingship, nor I wish for *Moksha*. All I yearn for is the mere touch of your lotus feet."⁵ The worship of God does not merely mean the idol worship but performing one's own prescribed duty without expecting fruit, or reward is the highest form of Bhakti.

The message of Jnaneshwara is the same as given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna in *Mahabharata* : perform your duty and expect no reward. Another kind of Bhakti has been emphasised by Jnaneshwara. He called it remembrance of God's name and singing of his praises. This is very akin to the Sikh concept of Bhakti and is in tune with the *Tauseef-o-sana* of the sufis and the utterances of saint poets of Adi Granth. *Namsimran* and *Kirtana* are two sacred ways preached by Gurbani and these have to be performed through utmost devotion.

Bhakti Purana has mentioned nine types of devotions which are called *Navdha Bhakti*. In fact, these are nine different ways enumerated by the Purana, leading to the realms of God as mentioned below :-

SRAVANA	—	Listening to His name.
KIRTANA	—	Singing His praises.
SIMRAN	—	Reciting His name
PADSEVAN	—	Touching the feet of Guru with reverence.
ARCHANA	—	Worshipping with respect.
DASYA	—	Serving as a servant.
SAKHYA	—	Love as a friend.
ATMA NIVEDAN	—	Complete surrender.
TIRTH YATRA	—	Pilgrimage of sacred places.

Guru Granth Sahib does not propagate *Navdha Bhakti*. According to the Guru poets, the so-called thought

process ultimately is bound to become mechanical. Under these circumstance, the love becomes conditional and devotion must be unbounded and unlimited. They choose to symbolise the nine ways of devotion, to our body organs. The organs of senses such as faculty, function, feeling, sensation, touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing. These perceptive senses are described as the nine doors leading to the tenth gate (*Dasam Dvar*). The nine doors are open but the tenth one is hidden.⁶ The beauty of the seeker lies in locating the tenth door. The yearning of the finite soul is an incessant process, ever perpetual and the search for the tenth door continues. Like the yogi who severs his senses from worldly beings and concentrates on the tenth hidden organ reaches the *Dasam Dvar*, and the craving of the finite soul ends in union with the infinite.

Adi Granth has used the symbol of a wife trying to impress her husband by wearing different sets of attractive clothes and ornaments but the poor thing does not know that it is not the clothing but the intrinsic beauty that would impress him. The symbolic meaning of clothes in metaphysical language is the human body which is mortal and perishable. Instead of decorating the earthly body, one must try to develop the mind's spiritual elevation so as to attain a permanent niche in '*Sach Khand*' (Heaven or the abode of God).

It must be understood that Adi Granth uses the symbol of Husband and Wife⁷, allegorically. According to the Guru poets, all the human beings are wives of *Akal Purakh*. Whenever it pleases His Grace, He calls us to His abode and opens the doors of salvation. This union in the Sufi genre is the meeting of the lovers because the Sufis

see God as the beloved and this sacred relationship has been described as the most sensitive, endearing and affectionate. In the Bhakti tradition same is the relationship between Bhakta and Bhagwan. Besides the symbols of husband and wife or the lover and the beloved, Adi Granth has also mentioned a few other links between the *Jeev Atma* and the Supreme Being. He has been referred as the benevolent father, loving mother, honourable brother and very dear friend :-

Thou are my father, Thou art my mother
Thou art my brother, Thou art my nearest kin
Thou art my protector (here there and everywhere)
With thou as my shield, I am immune to fear⁸.

— Adi Granth
(Majh M-5)

The symbols of everyday life make it easier for a common man to understand the complications of metaphysical philosophy and the deep interpretation of devotion. Marriage is the happiest event in a man's life. Since the Guru poets do not preach asceticism, they want the human beings to live life in full, enjoy every moment of it and see the divine light in every minor shade of its span. Here we find a bridegroom going to the bride's house, riding a horse, with pomp and show. In the second scene, the bride departs from her parental home for the house of her husband. Her relationship with her father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends have come to an end. Symbolically the parental home is this world and each one of us has to go to the house of the in-laws (the other world). "Every maiden has to go to her in-laws' house. Every lass has to get married"⁹. Marriage is not the union

of two bodies but it is the amalgamation of two souls. The individual soul merging in the all-pervading spirit. Here is a quotation from Kabir :

Sing, sing the blissful bridal songs, O, bride.

My groom has come to my house riding the dazzling stallion

He is accompanied by the bridal party

And you know what?

He is none else but the kind Rama, himself¹⁰.

— Adi Granth p. 485

(Gauri Kabir)

Three elements of *Navdha Bhakti*, namely *Kirtan*, recitation of Nam and devotion, have found reference in the Bani of the Guru poets and in fact, these are essential part of the Sikh way of life, but one should not forget that *Navdha Bhakti* on the whole is offered exclusively to Sargun, deity and the Gurus were the devotees of *Nirgun Bhagwan*. Another basic difference is that the Guru poets looked at *Navdha Bhakti* as a devotion to personal God, or more so devotion to Shakti, the power associated with the personal deity. This attitude according to the Gurus is selfish and is considered as an effort for personal material gains. The devotion to God has got to be selfless and totally dedicated. Another important factor which must be remembered is that the acceptance of *Bhakti* depends upon His benign will and kindness. He may or may not accept our offerings, so the best thing is to perform one's duty and leave the rest to Him, as was conveyed by Lord Krishna to Arjun.

Bhakti Redefined

The priestly culture reached its zenith, but according

to the law of nature there is always a reaction to the outrageous extravagant actions. There came the note of protest when Charvaks, Jains and Buddhists challenged this compartmentalisation of the society and revolted against the aggressive Brahmanic supremacy. This gave rise to a new inquisitive spirit and brought with it the reorientation of Hindu culture. Great epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatha* were written which represented the very core of Hindu philosophy. The epics adopted the most popular form of narrative poetry. History and mythology took the shape of allegory. This was considered the most glorious period of Hindu philosophy. *Bhagwad Gita*, the song celestial, was the product of this period.

The Sankhya and Yoga system of Hindu philosophy as defined in the Upanishads was combined in the new doctrine of Bhakti, more specifically expressed in *Bhagawad*. In simple language it says : "Perform your duty (Karma) without expectation on any reward." The Upanishad conceives God as Impersonal deity. While the earlier concept is Advaitism, the latter theory propagates Sri Krishna and Sri Rama as Avatars — the incarnations of God Vishnu. Adi Granth accepts the former version only. Besides Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagwad, the Puranas and Tantras have also found a place in the poetry of saint poets included in Adi Granth, which is a very valuable contribution made by them.

Before we take up the Yogic system of Hindu philosophy, let us acquaint our readers with the background of Shakta's and the Yogic exercises which form the backbone of this system. According to *The Religious*

Literature of India by J.N. Farquar, the *Kanpattas* (Yogis) derive their system from *Nathas*, some of whom are *Shakatas*, who worship Shakti, the spouse of Shiva. According to *Hath Yog Pradipka* and *Gorakh Bodh*, they are followers of Shiva and consider him as the supreme God. They say that emancipation from suffering and worldly existence is the ultimate goal. This goal is to be achieved by *Hath Yog*, ultimately culminating in union with Shiva. The *Gorakh Bodh* enumerates the steps of this practice as follows :

The *Nabhi* (the circle of air) contains the vital air in our body, supported by the void. According to them the *Shuniya* is spread everywhere. The vital air vivifies the *Manas* in the heart. The *Manas* is controlled by three factors, the Moon, the Sun and the Space. Another important factor is the *Shabad* (Word) which resides in *Manas* was in the *Shunya* (Void). The vital air has no shape and it is called *Nirakar*. The intermediate space between heaven and earth contains the word and the moon. The *Anhad Nad* is heard by the Yogis in the void. Void has been classified in four categories. These are : *Sahaj*, *Anubhav*, *Prana*, and *Atit Shuniya*. The spirit rests here in deep slumber which is death.

The *Shaktic Yoga* is similar to *Hath Yoga* but it is based on the principle of *Shabd* (sound). The sound is multifarious and also forms part of our nerve systems called *Naris*. Three such *Naris* are named *Ira*, *Pingla*, and *Sushmana* and have been mentioned in *Adi Granth*. The most important of these *Naris* is *Sushmana* which is attached to our spinal chord. The centres of this occult force are described as six circles situated in the human

body and are lowest circle which is called Mooldhara. The base containing Brahma in the form of a Linga and Devi lies asleep, coiled round the Linga three and a half times, like a serpent. It is called *Kundalini*. The Saktic Yoga awakens the *Kundalini* and induces it to enter the higher circles one by one till it reaches the highest *Charka* in brain. All these channels and *Chakras* are capable of inducing miraculous powers, as stated in the Yogic system.

Vaishnavism

The Vaishnavism had left a deep impact on Bhakti movement. The belief that Sri Rama and Sri Krishna were the incarnations of Vishnu, is an offshoot of Shankara's Jnan marg. This is called the path of knowledge. This ideology preached the union of *Jeev* and *Atma*. '*Aham Brahm Asmi*' is the state of eternal Bliss, when the lover and beloved become one, when finite merges with the infinite and becomes inseparable. The sufis have described this state as the realisation : when the devotee says '*Ain-ul-Haq*', I am God. Yes once you become one with the Lord, you have the right to declare your attainment, but Sikh philosophy does not accept this. You may attain all the qualities of the Super Being, yet you are not the supreme. The Gurus have called it '*Haun*' or '*Haumen*' (ego). According to them humility is the key word and not the pride.

While discussing the Bhakti movement in Northern India, one cannot forget the Tamil devotional cult of South India, which has played a significant role in moulding the masses towards spiritualism. The Alvar saints as they were called had made a great contribution in spreading the

message of love through knowledge and their scholastic discourses. Their written treatises of the Vedantic tradition of the Aryan culture remain unsurpassed till today, reinforced the Vedic traditions with stress on cleansing the obscure philosophy of its inconsistencies. They made it more acceptable to people and were able to have a lot of following of the devotional stir started by them. The Keralite Brahmin named Shankaracharya, was the main interpreter of Vedantic philosophy. He preached Advaita (Monoism) and established *Maths*, centres of learning all over India, which gave an impetus to the Bhakti movement.

According to Shankara the universe in an illusion (*Maya*). The ordinary eye cannot see beyond the smoke screen spread by *Maya*. Blinded by this illusion, the human senses cannot perceive the reality and keep yearning for the truth. This whets their thirst for *Bhakti* and heightens the desire of spiritual communion.

The source of Shankara's knowledge was Vedic and Upanishadic philosophy. Shankara's thoughts also resembled those of Buddhists. Ramanuja was another important exponent of soul and body which has been discussed by him at length. He explained Bhakti in Vedantic terms. According to him :

"The entire order of the universe is based in Brahman. The world is his body and all that happens around us are his moods. Nothing can happen without his will".

This expression is very close to Adi Granth.¹⁰ Now examine the moods and shades of the Creator as defined

by the Fifth Guru.

"Now he discovers like a Pundit
And now he observes silence and meditates.
And now he becomes an ascetic, a seeker, a dispenser of knowledge.
Now he becomes a worm, an elephant, even a moth.
Like a juggler he juggles through many a part.
But so does a man dance as is the will of the Lord.
Nanak, there is no one other than the Lord Himself".

Gauri-Sukhmani-M-5

Adi Granth-page 275

Though the credit of implanting Bhakti in the Northern soil goes to the Alvar saints, yet they fail to bring the ideals of devotion to the mass level. Sikhism on the other hand institutionalised it and gave a practical shape by introducing Bhakti at *sangat* and *pangat* level. This socio-spiritual activism in metaphysical, conceptual and moral spheres is the motto of Adi Granth.

Advaitvad

Advaitvad (Non-dualism) as stated earlier was preached by Shankara, a prominent scholar of Alvar school of *Bhakti* from South India. This school believed in the reality of Brahman, who is absolute and eternal and the Vedic Gods were completely ignored. The stress was not on the object of worship, but on the relationship between man and God. The conception of God being the supreme, self-created and self existent was adopted by the saint poets of Bhakti movement and accepted by Sikhism. It is very interesting to note the deep similarity between this Vedantic theory and Islamic concept of God. Islam accepts God as '*Wahidit-al-wajood*' and '*La-Shreek*', meaning the

only one who is without double or duplicate. The same being the basic principle of Sikhism has been depicted by Guru Nanak in the *Mool Mantra* and has become the core of the Sikh philosophy.

The other school of Bhakti in South India, preached by Vallabhacharya, Ramanuja, Madhva and Nimbarka believed in *vasistadvaitya*, meaning qualified non dualism. The three ultimate realities as defined by this school are God, Soul and Matter. While God is supreme the other two are interdependent. However, this is the depiction of the *Nirakar* God, popular with saint poets. Shankara had defined the world as *Maya* (an illusion), but Ramanuj said, 'No' it is real. *Adi Granth* accepts the latter version.

"He Himself is True, True is His creation"¹¹

Unity of God and brotherhood of man has been reflected through almost all the sacred books of different religions. According to the saint poets of *Adi Granth*, there is but one God. He is the sole indivisible, self-existent, incomprehensible, timeless, all pervading and indescribable. There are a few references in poetry of saint poets that represent the deep roots of Hindu philosophy. Specially the characters and episodes from mythology. It lends their poetry a grant hoary character impregnated with imagery, and representation of our mythical past. Take for instance Shiv Shakti cult. The Hindu beliefs of *Trimurti*—Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh—have also been used by the Gurus, besides the saint poets.

"Tis the Divine Mother
Who conceived in a mysterious way
The Deities Three, Approved.



One Creator, one Sustainer,
One Destroyer of the world
But Nay;
Tis will of the Lord that surveys us all,
as He ordains"¹²

Shaivism

According to the Hindu belief, Shiva is the Supreme Lord Himself, and Shakti is all energy. The mother image was accorded great veneration, because the life is created through mother's womb. Shakti is the female creative energy, according to the Shakti cult. Shiva is the chief deity of Hindu *Trimurti*, and Shakti is his spouse. Adi Granth mentions Shakti as Maya or the hand-maid of Shiva.

"Then why not worship He himself than his maid servant?"¹³

The Alvar saints are divided in two groups and are classified as Vaishnavites and Shaivites. These were the two main branches of the South Indian Bhakti movement. The hymns dedicated to the two deities are preserved in two separate are Nirgun and Sargun Bhakti. While the former believe in the Absolute — the formless aspect of God and the latter worship His incarnations. For them Rama and Krishna are Bhagwan (God) in human form.

Those who believed in *Advaita* sand the praises of the Absolute, and were called Nirgunias. Guru Nanak and Kabir were the greatestst exponents of this school. The Sargun school accepted Rama and Krishna as the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Tulsi, Surdas and Mira were

the main exponents of this school. The Vedic description of God, defining the Infinite refers to all-pervading spirit, as stated in Rig Veda :

The Purush had a thousand heads, a thousand eyes,
a thousand feet.

Rig Veda — 10 — 90

It is interesting to note that the Omnipotent 'Adi Purush' as referred to in Rig Veda is 'Akal Purakh' in Adi Granth. The eternal being has many names and is mentioned by the saint poets as *Kartar*, *Karta Purakh*, *Khaliq*, *Srijanhar* and so on. Let us compare the above quotation of Rig Veda, which has close similarity with Guru Nanak's famous hymn, written in Rag Dhanasri.

Millions are Thy eyes and yet Thou hast no eyes.
Millions are Thy forms and yet Thou hast no form.
Millions are Thy feet and yet Thou hast no feet.
Millions are Thy noses and yet Thou hast no nose.
Thou are the Spirit that pervadeth all.

Dhanasri M-I

Adi Granth — page 663

Side by side of mythology, one often finds references to *Bed* and *Kateb* in the Bani of Gurus and saint poets. While *Bed* stand for Vedas, which we have discussed eariler, *kateb* stands for the four books of Semitic Text. These are : Judaism (Torah and Zabur), Christianity (Angil) and Islam (Quran). The credibility of these holy books is established by the saint poets. Here is the famous *Doha* of Kabir included in *Adi Granth* :

The Vedas and the Semitic books are not wrong
Wrong is he only, who has no thinking¹⁴. — Kabir

Buddhism and Jainism

The saint poets of Adi Granth have also been influenced by Buddhism and Jainism. It is a different story that the Buddhists have been regarded by Hindus as a 'dissenting group'. Their philosophical doctrines do not qualify them for Hindu way of life which allows absolute freedom of thought. Like the Jains they have renounced the Hindu Dharma and substituted it by one of their own. They rejected the Vedas, the Brahmins as agents of salvation and the Hindu caste system. Buddhism spread in India on account of its knowledge, devotion and asceticism. It extended its boundaries beyond Asia. However, when Hindu Vedantic movement was at its climax Shankaracharya countered Buddhism with its own weapons — knowledge and scholarship. A time came when Buddhism became extinct in the country of its origin. The coming of Islam was the final blow. It is interesting to note that a Japanese scholar named Chihiro Kaiso (Tanka), while quoting E. Zeller¹⁵, thus give credit to Bhakti movement with "securing the final triumph of Hinduism over Buddhism and Jainism".

The philosophical context of the Buddhist ethical code is the conviction "that all the constituents of any living person and the whole live world are in constant flux. Nothing remains immune to change except Nirvana." Hence they preached withdrawal from affection and attachment. Here is a quote from *Dhammapada* :

From enderment, affection attachment, lust and craving, springs grief, springs fear. For him who is wholly free from endearment, affection, attachment, lust and craving, there is no grief, much less fear.

— *Dhammapada* — 212 — 16.

According to Buddhism, all selves suffer from three basic deficiencies of their existence : (1) Transitoriness — *Anicca*; (2) The basic unreality of the self — *Anatta*, and (3) Consequent misery—*Dukha*. As a result of these three doctrines, renunciation of the world becomes imminent. One is forced to become an ascetic and concentrate on Moksha. Neither the Gurus nor the saints of *Adi Granth* have preached asceticism. The idea of world-nagation was never appreciated by them. They wanted and preached the achievement of morality through truthful living, love and service of humanity. Then why renounce the world? *Adi Granth* says :-

As fragrance abides in the flower,
As reflection is within the mirror,
So does your Lord abide within you,
Why search for him without.¹⁶

— *Dhanashri M-9*

Adi Granth, Page - 684.

Buddha has been accepted as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu by many sects of Hindus. As such he is one of the deities of Hinduism. However, according to *Adi Granth* there have been umpteen Buddhas¹⁷. Buddhism accepts transmigration and retribution of Hinduism. The most important doctrine of Buddhism is ahimsa. One can find many references in *Adi Granth*, in this respect. However the interpretation of *Nirvana* by the Gurus and saint poets differs from the Buddhist concept. *Nirvana* of Buddhist means the end of miseries. However the attainment of the eternal bliss of oneness with God is *Nirvana* for the latter. As for Buddhists there is no God and on the other hand the saint poets were staunch lovers of God alone. Let us

give the example of adumb person, who after tasting the sweets can only enjoy its tastes, just its sweetness, but is unable to express it. Those who do not believe in God, unfortunately are deprived of the pleasure of oneness with Him, which is the Supreme Bliss.

Besides some of the influences as mentioned above, the saint poets have expressed a positive affirmation of *Shunyavad*. Shunya means void, emptiness or negation. It has mostly been used in Buddhist scriptures. Nag Arjun elaborated this doctrine with the Buddhist monks at Rajgir and Buddh Gaya, and discussed the same in his discourses with roaming monks from Ceylon and Siddhas of mountainous regions, who often visited him.

The famous doctrine of 'Middle Path' which has following in all believers of Buddhism was evolved by Gautam Buddha during his meditation, leading to enlightenment. The followers of 'Middle Path' were called the Nihilists, i.e. those who believed in nothingness. Later on, this word was accepted in a larger philosophical sense and was described as *Anirvachan*, thereby meaning, 'which cannot be expressed in words'. It is beyond definition and beyond *Gyanindras* (sense organs). This void cannot be experienced by sense organs or mind. In other words, it is the midway between sensuality *Shunya* and ascetic self-torture. Nor are we in a position to examine the *Gunas* (adjectives) attributed so *Shunya*. Are these not the same as those of the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient? As expressed in *Adi Granth Shunya* is void, yet it is devoid of physical materiality. In other words, the believers of *Shunya* described it as beyond perceiving and human consciousness. It is limitless : neither this is matter nor

spirit. Then what is it? We may conform to the pre-Buddhist description, 'Neti Neti', which seems to be more appropriate than the various versions stated above. The literal translation of the quote 'Neti Neti', is neither this nor that. In a nutshell, this is the essence of our entire discussion as given above.

Innumerable examples of *Shunyavad* can be quoted from the poetry of the saint poets, especially those belonging to the school called, Nirgun. Kabir was the main exponent of this school. According to him, the ultimate bliss is the merger of human soul in Shunya. Kabir has called it *Sahaj Samadhi*. At a number of places he has mentioned it *Sun Samadhi*, *Sun sabad* (Shunya Shabad), *Sun Mandal* etc. Both Kabir and Guru Nanak have described a *Sun Mandal* in our body which is the abode of the Absolute.

The world is the abode of the True one,¹⁸

He Himself abides in it.

According to his will, He merges in Himself.

To some He destroys according to His will.

Some he rids of Maya, others he involves,

And who knows, Whom in His mercy, He'll Bless.

— Asa Di var M-2

Expressing his views on 'Middle Path', Nagarjun wrote thus :

"The teaching of Dharma by the various Buddhas is based on the two truths namely, the relative (worldly) truth and the absolute (Supreme) truth. Those who do not know the two truths, cannot understand the profound nature of the Buddha's

teaching. Without relying on every day common practices (relative truth), absolute truth, Nirvana cannot be attained. A wrongly conceived Sunyata can ruin a slow witted person".

Mulamadhyamaka Kanika 24, 8 — 12

The creator is one and is both material and efficient cause of the world. He is the source of all being and the world is His play. He is the creator, the sustainer and the destroyer. The Hindu concept of Trimurti is referred to Him. Before the universe came into existence, Brahma was *Shunya*. By His will the world *Maya* took shape. Atma (soul) is mentioned as Purush.

Origin of the Universe

There are many interesting stories almost in all the religions about the origin of the universe. The first book of Genesis of old Testament says :

"In the beginning when God created the heaven and earth, the earth was formless waste land, and darkness covered the abyss God said, 'Let there be a dome in the middle of waters to separate one body of water from the other God called the dome 'The Sky'. Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, Let Him have dominance over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and the cattle and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.'"

How close is this description to the Muslim concept of man, as 'Ashraf-ul-Makhlookat'.

The Aryans believed that the world had grown out of a vast cosmic sacrifice. The rituals of sacrifice evolved

out of the early primitive customs. Was it void (Shunya), which was all pervasive? So out of nothingness, God created the universe. Here is a very fascinating account given in Rig Veda. It says :-

Then even nothingness was not, nor existence.
 There was no air then, nor the heavens beyond it.
 Who covered it? Where was it? In whose keeping?
 Was there then cosmic water in depths unfathomed?
 Whence it all came, and how creation happened
 The Gods themselves are later than creation.
 So who knows truly whence it has arisen?

— *Rig Veda 129*

Translation A.L. Basham

The book of Genesis says, "It was God's command that brought the universe into existence". Similarly, the followers of Islam tell us that God ordered 'Kun' and the world came into existence. Sufis have mentioned it at a number of places. Quran says, "When He ordains a decree a thing, He saith unto it only : Be, and it is." — (Surah II, 117).

Similarly, the concept of the origin of universe as given in Adi Granth is much the same as in the Book of Genesis and Rig Veda :-

There was darkness for countless years
 There was neither earth nor sky, it was His will
 There was neither day nor night, neither Sun nor Moon
 He was in deep meditation.
 When it was His will, He created the universe.¹⁹

The stress is more on the will of God. In the last line of the quotation from Rig Veda, it has been said 'So

who knows' in this respect, a reference may be made to the very first Bani of Guru Nanak — Jap Ji wherein he has said "What was the time, season, day, month of cosmos, knows none". He adds :

"The Pundits knew it not.

For had they know, in Puranas they should have mentioned.

Nor the Qazi does, who interprets the Quran

Nor the Yogi knows the date, season, month

But the one who created the universe, knows alone.

He hath all this mystery in His will"²⁰.

— 21st Stanza of Jap Ji

As to the time and circumstances of creation, many scholars and men of religion have from time to time made surmises as arbitrary and wilful as altogether presumptuous and even profane. There is lot of similarity about creation of universe in the sacred books of various religions. Besides, there are many other aspects where one finds uniformity and parallelism in expressions. Take for example the concept of Paradise. Islam and Buddhism have their own concepts. The Quran gives a picture of beautiful large eyed *Hoors* (nymphs) of perpetual youth. They accompany the men of God as a compensation for *Zuhd* (austerity) which they had observed during their life time. Similarly, Buddhist concept of Nirvana is all bliss. The bliss includes seven jewelled palaces, fine objects, smells, tastes and sensations, yet it is not to be regarded as pleasure. One who controls his worldly desires, gets them in heaven. Is this not the *Zuhd* in Islam as stated above. Islam seems to have inherited the concept of heaven from Judaism and Christianity. According to Hazrat Mohammad there are seven spheres, each situated one

above the other at the high and higher spheres, where men with high and higher virtues are sent according to the grading of their moral godness. Similarly, they have described seven under-worlds. Adi Granth has mentioned this account only as a reference. According to the Gurus and the saint poets there are lacs and lacs of heavens and hells and there have been countless Buddhas (intelligent beings)²¹

It would be interesting to make a reference to Surah thirty-first of Quran Sherif and Surahtul Lukmans 27th *Ayat*, wherein it has been said that if all the trees of the universe became the pen and all the seven seas turned into ink, even then the mystery of the creator cannot be described. The same idea has been repeated by Kabir :

If I make the seven seas as my ink
all the woods my pen, O Lord,
And all the earth my paper,
I will still not be able to write
Thy whole praise, O Lord!²²

— 81st Sloka of Kabir
Adi Granth page - 1368

Sankhya system mentions Air, Water, Fire, Earth and Sky — the five *Tatva* as the basic elements of the universe. Guru Nanak in his hymn entered in Adi Granth says :

From the True Lord the Air came into being.
From Air Water was born
From Water were created the three worlds
And the light of the Lord merged in every living being.

— Sri Rag — M-I
Adi Granth, Page - 19

While Buddhism is silent on the use of the word "God", Sikhism, Islam and Christianity are unanimous about oneness of God. In Buddhism, the oneness is expressed as interdependent origination—the golden Middle Path. Many of the saint poets included in Adi Granth, followed the two main branches of Bhakti - Krishna Bhakti and Ram Bhakti. They accepted Rama and Krishna as the incarnations of Vishnu. Others were idol worshippers and believed in Shakti as Devi. Some of the saint poets were believers of the new religion from Semitic countries in the form of Islam. One could find conglomerate of religions in India, pulling apart the Indian society. The Brahminic *Karm Kand*, Nath Panthic philosophy and the awesome exercises of Kann-Patta yogis had cast spell on the ignorant masses. The society stood divided into various segments of castes and sub-castes each one trying to pull his weight individually with disgust and malice towards the other. It was at this time that the Bhakti movement came up and the saint poets bridged the gap of hatred for the first time between the warring communities. The saint poets sat on the common platform of devotion and shared their spiritual experience of faith and love. They found tremendous following among the masses and loved one and all.

Through the utterances of the saint poets, a whole host of Hindu philosophy, ideology and myths have appeared in Adi Granth. The saint poets who came from different parts of India represented different groups, sects and regions. They presented their own imagination, based on their own interpretation of the mythological references. One may not believe in the story behind a particular myth

and character, yet the mythological references have profusely been used in the utterances of Sikh Gurus and the saint poets. However, the point to remember is that most of the mythological references have been used symbolically in order to justify the poetic treatment of the theme, and the understanding of the masses. Nevertheless the contribution of the saint poets in this respect is very significant and noticeable. Similarity of thoughts and expressions is another contribution of the saint poets, which proves that they all were tuned to the same frequency consisting of love for mankind and unflinching loyalty to God.

Similarity between religions existed traditionally. Buddhism and Sikhism, Sikhism and Islam, Islam and Christianity have many common beliefs, views, theories, as we have been discussing earlier. Take, for instance, Guru Nanak's famous composition *Jap Ji* and the *Mool Mantra* that precedes it. This is the core of Sikh philosophy :

By the Grace of the one Supreme Being, the Eternal, the
All pervading, Purush, The Creator, without Fear, without
Hate, The Being Beyond time, Not incarnated, Self-existent
The Enlightner.²³

In this arrangement, the word '*Onkar*' is very significant and symbolic. It is a deep-rooted word and has many shades and interpretations. However, Swami Vivekananda has described *Onkar* as the holiest of the holy words of the Vedas. Now let us compare this with '*Onkar*' described in *Mandukopanishad*. It says, "That which was, is, will be, is all '*Onkar*'. Compare it with the first stanza of Guru Nanak's *Jap Ji*, which tells about the eternity and infinity of the Supreme Being :

True in the Beginning
True in the Primal age
True He is and True He shall be.

Compare it with the Kalma of Quran, which says :

We start with the name of Allah, who is kind and gracious.

There is nobody else worth adoration and Mohammad is the true Messenger of Allah.

According to the Muslims, Allah is the one True God and does not share His divinity with any associated. However, according to the Quranic interpretation, they regard Mohammed as the only messenger of God (first and last). While the unity of God is shared by the Adi Granth, the messenger part of Mohammed is not accepted. Only the concept of one God gives an affinity to Islam and Sikhism. Monotheism is not the exclusive idea of Islam, the Adi Granth abides by this. Besides, the Hindu idea of *Maya*, reincarnation and the law of *Karma* have also figured in the poetry of saint poets. Some people are of the opinion that Adi Granth is but a reproduction of Vedas; however, it is significant to note that Adi Granth rejected the authority of Vedas, Puranas, and Shastras. According to Cunningham, poetry of Adi Granth is a compromise between Hinduism and Islam. Some other scholars like Monier and W.J. Williams²⁴ have also subscribed to this idea. Macauliffe has given it a separate status and accepted it as a binding moral code of an independent religion.²⁵

Indian mysticism as interpreted by Kabir is the same as accepted by Guru Nanak. They were both the

products of the Bhakti movement, so they have much in common. This could be one of the reasons why Kabir's compositions have received much prominence in Adi Granth. Both came through Bhakti movement and belonged to Nirgun School of Bhakti. When Guru Nanak appeared on the scene, Kabir had already established himself as a poet, reformer and spiritual guide. He had laid stress on the spiritual and moral uplift which was dear to Guru Nanak. Though Kabir preached affinity between Hindus and Muslims, he continued to remain a Vaishnavite and accepted Rama as incarnation.

According to Hindu philosophy, there are three ways of salvation — *Dharma*, *Gyana* and *Bhakti*. While *Dharma* has been described as the way of works, *Gyana* is the way of knowledge and *Bhakti* the way of devotion. *Dharma* controls the household life, *Karma* defines duties towards God. According to the Hindu way of life, one must visit the temples and go on pilgrimages to the holy places. Rituals and ceremonies for various occasions like birth and death, have been specified. There are also duties towards the dead when one is required to observe *Shradh* and feed the Brahmins and holy men. On all such occasions the priest, a Brahmin, is the presiding medium; this process called *Karma Kand* has not been accepted by Adi Granth and the saint poets.

Brahminism is a convenient term for a form of Hinduism originated in post-Vedic period. It is the observation on rituals and sacrifices to invoke various gods and goddesses. The saint poets of Adi Granth do not subscribe to this ritualism. In the series of commentaries called the 'Secret Knowledge of Upanishads' written in the

form of conversation, certain conclusions were set forth. Shankara however synthesised these conclusions. Here is an extract from Upanishads, which is in the form of dialogue between the Guru and the disciple :

‘Fetch me a fruit of the Banyan tree’

‘Here is one Sir.’

‘Break it.’

‘I have broken it Sir.’

‘What do you see?’

‘Very tiny seeds Sir.’

‘Break one.’

‘I have broken it Sir.’

‘What do you see now?’

Nothing Sir.’

“My son”, the Guru said, “what you do not perceive is the essence, and in that essence the mighty banyan tree exists. Believe me, my son, in that essences is self of all that is, That is the True, that is the Self²⁶.”

How subtly and beautifully this illustrates the Theory of Creation, relation between the human soul and the Universal soul. According to Shankara, this illustration clarifies how Brahma excludes from itself million of sould (Atmas), and along with them is established the status of the Creator called *Ishwara*, God, *Allah*, *Wahe Guru*. He is unmanifest and unknowable. This further clarifies the status of the *Bhakta* and *Bhakti*. It is a spiritual paradox, which could be interpreted as follows. The unknowable in this case being *Nirgun* and the one which is knowable, seen in all living and non-living forms is *Sargun*. These are the two basic directions to understand Bhakti

Movement.

We come to the conclusion that during the Vedic period Bhakti was seen in different forms, but no direct reference to Bhakti is available in the Vedic literature. Does that mean that Bhakti is the product of post-Vedic period? No, the Rigveda has used the word '*Bhaj*', which is the short form of '*Bhajan*'. Bhakti in the vedic period was achieved through *Karma* and *Jnan*. The stress was more on the written word; so much so that it was believed that if a wrong hymn was changed, or a word was missed, it could change the fate of an individual adversely, or negate the status of the entire performance.

According to Adi Granth, there are three essential elements of *Bhakti*, namely, *Nam* (recitation of His name), *Kritana* (singing of hymns singulary or in the chours) and last but not the least, devotion. A combination of all the three froms was used traditionally to invoke blessing of the venerated deities by the Bhaktas. Some one has very aptly defined *Bhakti* as very genuine search by the *Sadhak* for *Sadhya*. According to Swami Vivekananda, "The search is beginning, continuing and ending in love"²⁷?

Then came the period of specialisation. During this period, the Acharyas separated the elements of *Bhakti* and developed each element separately with a different school of philosophy. We find mention of the word *Bhakti* for the first time in Indian literature in Upanishads. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan '*Upa*' means (near) and '*ni*' stands for (down). As such the literal meaning of Upanishad is to sit near the *Guru* in order to gain *Jnan*. This is the beginning of *Bhakti*.

Bhagwad illustrates a different version of *Bhakti*. The traditional concept of God in India is — Formless, Supreme Being and Absolute. However, Gita tells us that sometimes He descends from His heavenly abode in the form of incarnations and takes birth in this world. Thus the personal and impersonal forms came to be worshipped. This process of *Bhakti* which starts with personal deity, leads to the devotion of Ultimate. (Compare this with the sufi doctrine of *Ishq-i-Majazi*, leading to *Ishq-i-Haqiqi*). Bhagwad Gita suggests three methods of *Bhakti-Karma Yoga, Jnan Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* — severally and collectively all leading to the union with the ultimate. Vedantic system of *Bhakti* specifies three stages of development and conditioning of mind. These are *Sravan*, *Manan* and *Nidhiyan*. During the *Sravana* stage, one is required to acquire the knowledge of scriptures, *Manan* is the application of knowledge so acquired and the last stage is *Nidhiyan*, where the *Sadhaka* applies his mind in meditation of the *Sadhya* — Supreme Being or His incarnation.

The most important way of salvation as stated earlier is devotion — the *Bhakti Marg*. This approach is purely devotional and follows the path of love towards God or a personal deity. The Hindu Bhaktas and sufi saints, who believed in this process, traced God through the path of love. However, the sufis replaced the personal deity with *Murshid* (Guru). Webster in the chapter on world religions, has specified *Bhakti* as "Devotion of a particular god or goddess in gratitude for aid received or promised. According to the first method — the way of works is basically legalistic and way of knowledge is philosophic". He sums up as follows : "The first way seeks a better

rebirth, the second entrance into *Nirvana*, and the third, union with a deity who may grant admission to heaven"²⁸.

Contrary to the Indian tradition of *Bhakti*, the above mentioned statements put the *Bhakta* in a state of self defence. In other words it means that the *Bhakta* indulges in *Bhakti* for his personal benefits. Though a crude expression yet it is a very doubtful statement, as the character of the *Bhakta* has always been defined as selfless, sacrificing and engaged in betterment of humanity, without personal gains or material consideration. It was the spiritual exhilaration which they experienced. The *Bhakti* was for the sake of it, or was it for the pleasure and ecstasy, leading to the rapture of the soul. No this is a unique experience which cannot be shared or expressed in words. Spiritual exhilaration can only be felt by organs of perception and our inner soul. The *Bhaktas* were always above the feeling of caste, creed of religion. They never prayed for themselves, their efforts have always been to improve the lot of mankind and their aim was '*Sarbat ka Bhalla*'.

We have talked about the Alvar Acharyas and their *Bhakti* Movement, which travelled from South to North and took the people by storm. Sant Kabir in one of his *Dohas* has given the credit to his Guru Ramanand of transplanting the seed of *Bhakti* in the Northern soil. Ramanand, the disciple of Acharya Ramajuja, was main torch-bearer who brought the light of Alvar Saints to Northern India. According to Kabir :

Bhakti originated in South, brought to North by Ramanand.
Kabir made it popular in the seven continents, and nine
Regions — the whole world²⁹.

Ramanand who had been roused by the Bhakti Movement of South, being the disciple of Ramanuja, strangely departed from his tradition of Krishna Bhakti (Who adore the love of Radha for Krishna), to the worship of Rama and his spouse Sita. Sant Kabir was an important product of Bhakti movement. By this time Sant Jnaneshwar and Tuka Ram had preached *Nirgun Bhakti*. Kabir took over from where they had left and became one of the greatest exponent of *Nirgun* school. On the other hand, Tulsidas and Surdas were the followers of *Sargun* school. Indian Bhakti tradition also influenced the saint poets of Adi Granth, who exchanged their thoughts with the Sikh Gurus. This gave rise to a popular movement and ultimately resulted in the compilation of the Sacred Book — Adi Granth — which was given the name of '*Pothi Sahib*'.

SOCIO-SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF GURU NANAK'S PHILOSOPHY

— *SURJIT SINGH CHAWLA*

Guru Nanak is invariably associated with the Bhakti movement which caused a religious ferment in the medieval India giving new orientation to Hindu way of thinking and modes of worship, reforming it and making it more acceptable to the masses, strengthening its inherent survival mechanisms to enable it to face the onslaught of cultural and religious aggression of the alien invaders. Guru Nanak being a conscious thinker who tried to arrive at his formulations after thoroughly debating with his contemporaries points and counter points and convincing them of the truth of his statements, naturally worked in a socio psychological context of which Bhakti cult and Sufism were inalienable aspects. Bhakti marg with it's philosophical foundations of love meditation obedience to the will of God; divine benevolence and stress on Karma instead of birth did have its effect on the Guru Nanak's way of thinking. But his whose poetry is not an expression of the eclectic philosophical thought of the medieval mystics of the various schools of Bhakti is a historical blasphemy which has been erroneously perpetuated by most of the historians.

J.N. Farquhar while enlisting eleven sects which have sprung from the influence of Kabir, puts Sikhs at No. 2. on the basis of the commonality of the following principles in all the sects :-

- (1) God alone is worshipped
- (2) Idolatory is strictly prohibited
- (3) Stress is laid on the value of the Guru
- (4) The literature is in vernacular.¹

A.L. Shrivastva is of the opinion that—Nanak another poet of Bhakti cult had almost identical views with those of Kabir. Ram Chandra Sukla in his history of Hindi Literature writes that at last Guru Nanak propagated the Nirgun Bhakti Cult of Kabir in Panjab.³ Although Scholars like Dr. Mohan Singh have convincingly refuted the legend of Guru Nanak being a disciple of Kabir⁴ the legend still persists and scholars like J.B. Harrison are still of the opinion that the sikh scriptures contain much of Kabir's teachings and verse. He further says what has survived of the teachings of its founder isn't so vigorous as that of his predecessor Kabir, nor so original as that of the Dadu's.⁵ But Mr. Harrison himself goes on to record, 'Sikhism revealed a power of growth, religious and political not possessed by Kabir or Dadu Panthis, so that, today they are minor sects, the sikh community is still politically important.'⁶

The sikhs have exhibited a robust dynamism and a capacity for passive as well active opposition to social oppression which did not exclude the desirability of using the force of arms which the proponents of Bhakti cult could hardly sanctify. The sikh dynamism for action comes from the identification of religion with ethics prompted by the belief in the desirability of detached involvement in life. The Bhakta poets before Nanak were against ritualism and gave importance to Karma as against birth, but they could not, excepting Kabir make departure from the ancient vedantic and Puranic religious asceticism which makes religion an individual affair, thereby preventing it from becoming a source of inspiration for dedicated disinterested, inspired socio political action inspite of the fact that the Bhakta poets showed an awareness of the

social injustice embodied in the caste stratification of society. Most of them belonged to low castes and were not supposed to have any spiritual pretensions. They could be allowed to simply eke out their existence in the daily drudgery of their life. They crusaded the brahmancial pretension of supremacy of Brahmanas who owing to the loss of political patronage were losing their importance. The Bhakta poets partially succeeded in compelling the Brahmins in conceding, though reluctantly, the individual's claims to worship. Rama Nand relaxed the caste rules while accepting pupils but he still thought it fit that the priestly functions ought to be confined to the Brahmanas.⁷ Furthermore it must be pointed out that the influence of low caste Bhakt poets was acceptable to their own people mostly. Though the songs of Kabir are mostly acknowledged by the Hindus in Northern India he is accepted as a saint and a saviour by a particular section of society. Same is the case with St. Ravidas. As compared to them the followers of Guru Nanak belong to all castes. The teaching Guru Nanak could definitely transcend caste considerations and give a severe jolt to Brahmanical order of social stratification. As a matter of fact these Bhakta poets lacked sufficiency of radicalism. They propagated a sort of revivalism. In their attitude to the problems created by caste consciousness they sought the approval of their theories in Hindu scriptures. This limited the scope of their deviation from tradition bound Hindu social system and modes of thinking.

It is definitely correct to say that Guru Nanak was a mystic and a man of God and not a political activist and his domain of thought and action was the domain of religion but religion in medieval India acted as a socio-political force in the form of aggressive Muslim

imperialism and rigidly stratified Hindu social system. But even as a man of religion he was different from Bhakta poets in the sense that he was not aiming at Hindu religious revival or making it more palatable to lower castes by trying to extricate from the high born a grudging acceptance of the right of worship on the part of unprivileged underdogs of Hindu social order. He did take part in the great debate in medieval Hindu mind staggering under the oppression of the unjust unfriendly, fanatical alien rule and groping for new values with a view to safeguard the right of the subject people to exist as social and religious entity.

But Guru Nanak made a great departure from the old modes of thoughts and action. He demolished old gods and condemned institutionalised religious bigotry and fanaticism. His verses are the product of an exuberant intellectuality drawing its emotive force from a sense of commitment and conviction and not the outburst of emotion under the impact of an overpowering emotion of love for a personalised deity. That way his utterances had iconoclastic implications as his religious mysticism was transcendental and monistic in its tone and temper and did not acknowledge the existence of the incarnations of God. As a mystic too, he believed in the establishment of a direct contact with God which did not acknowledge the need for an intermediary agency.

The Bhakta poets who mostly belonged to the non-priestly classes, naturally challenged the authenticity of Vedas and Shastras - the sources of Brahman spiritual and social superiority but this denunciation is generally milds, excepting in the case of Kabir.

To express his preference of intense spiritual experience over the pedantic reading of Puranas Namdev would say;

There are shastras and Vedas and Puranas without number

But I will sing not their song

For seated in the unbroken state of Trance

I would play upon the fulte that emitteth

The unstruck melody of the world.⁸

Kabir is a bit more severe in his rejection of vedas as these are not the source of divine knowledge;

Of what avail is the reading of vedas

Yea, it is like the load of sandalwood upon a donkey's back

For if thou knowest not the mystery of Lords name

How will thou be ferried across.⁹

His objection to the reading of vedas is, however, based on the fundamental premise of the Bhakti that salvation comes not through the reading of scriptures but through loving realisation of God. He was not against the reading of Vedas. He was against thoughtless chanting of these :-

Call not false the vedas, or the semite texts
for false is he who giveth not thought to them
He is like the one who sayeth God is in all
and yet slayeth life for food.¹⁰

In contrast Guru Nanak's denunciation of Vedas is more definite. He refuses to accept these as books of divine revelation holding within them a knowledge of the mystery of the universe :-

What the time, what the epoch, what the lunar day
and what the week and day

What the season what the month that the world was
created

The Pandit did not discover; had they done so, they
would have recorded in the Puranas;

Nor did the Qazis discover it, had they done so they
would have recorded it in Quaran.

The vedic theory of the creation of the world by
Brahma is not acceptable to him because he was aware of
the vast complexity of the world;

But there are those of intellect
who like to know than do
Then know that there are winds and fires
Waters and Sivas and Krishnas
Numerous Brahmas at work and play
Moulding and fashioning forms and shape of many
hues.¹¹

It is by reflecting on the reality of Real and not by
persistent perusal of the vedas that we can purify the
mind of the dust and dross :-

The one deed that leads to Bliss is to reflect
on the reality of the Real. Thou recitest the
vedas and shastras, but thou dost deeds of
man of world. And thy mind is cleansed not of
the scum of guile and within thee is piled the
dirt of sin. Like a spider thou are caught in
thine own web tossed upside down.¹²

He would tell the high priests of learning that
knowledge of the vedas was not sufficient to destroy the

sinful inclinations;

You say, 'O pandit, As darkness is dispelled when a lamp is lighted, so by reading vedas sinful inclinations are destroyed. I say, 'when the sun riseth, the moon is not seen, Where divine knowledge appeareth, mental ignorance is dispelled.¹³

The inference from the above lines is obvious. The Guru did not consider the vedas to be the store house of divine knowledge. His attitude towards vedas is more definite and leaves a great scope for deviation and departure from the traditional modes of thought. He had no inclination to perpetuate the vedantic religious system. He was trying to evolve a dynamic system of thought which combined spiritual meditation with social action by turning his back on austere asceticism and purile intellectualism which divorces knowledge from action and religion from ethics.

In the middle ages the Indian social system and the Indian way of life, modes of thought etc were exposed to new unfriendly influences which threatened the very existence of the religious, political foundations of Indian society. The emergence of Bhakti movement in this period of flux, trouble and turmoil was facilitated by certain social and psychological factors. The stress on idea of love and oneness of God, the cult of love, and the idea of all religions being the different roads to the approval of God, psychologically prepared the Indians to consider reconciliation with the Muslim presence not only pragmatically but even morally desirable. The atmosphere which the Bhakti movement and the Sufis aimed at creating, was mutually beneficial to the rulers and the

ruled in the sense that it tended to decrease the inherent hostility of a subject people to their masters and at the same time it tended to have a moderating influence on the impatience of the invaders to interfere in the religious and cultural life of the people of India. The idea of the equality of all men discouraged the tendency on the part of the oppressed sections of Indian society to embrace Islam, strengthening thereby the survival mechanisms of Hindu social system. The medieval mind trying to escape the oppression of the alien religious and political fanaticism found a refuge in the devotional attitude and there was an outburst of devotional emotion in a literature woven round the ancient Hindu Heroes Rama and Krishna who were considered the incarnations of God and looked upon as person as incarnation of God Himself and their idols worshipped by their devotees. The cult of love and devotion had a soothing aspect because it acted as a sort of shock absorber and developed among the devotees a sort of social antipathy and otherworldliness. Most of the Bhakta poets like Tulsi, Mira, Namdev, Trilochan, Dhanna Ramanand, were either the devotees of Lord Rama or Lord Krishna.

He has categorically stated that the secret of God is not found in Muslim or Hindu scriptures; God's secret is not found in the vedas or the books of Muslims. He has no father or mother.¹⁴

Namdev was the worshipper of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna and his attitude was, naturally that of ecstatic appreciation and adoration and this worshipful aloration is expressed in his verses :-

Blessed is the flute of Lord, That ringeth

(within me) unstruck subtly softly. Blessed is the sheep that offerth its wool, To weave the blanket that blessed Krishna Dons, O, Devki, other of Krishna, blessed art thou, I whose home came that all prevading Lord the master of Maya.¹⁵

Lord Rama and Krishna were equally adorable and he cherished the memory of Rama and Krishna :-

As is Krishan cherished by the city of Gokul
So in the heart of Namdev is Rama, So utter
thou the name of Rama, Shyama Govind, my
God.¹⁶

The Nectar of Lord's quintessence could be drunk by remembering the sacred name of Lord Rama :-

"My Lord is Ramchandra, the son of Dasratha, and Lo, I drink the Nectar of Lord's presence;"¹⁷

He could utter these lines as well, which of course give expression to an attitude of irreverence:-

"O Pandit, I saw thy Mahadeva, too riding the white Nandi Bull. Cursing the store keeper for his bad food and billing his son. O Pandit, I saw thy Ramchandra too coming. And arrayed against Ravna, losing his wife."¹⁸

But one the whole Namdev's poetry is an expression of his ecstasy and agony experienced by him in his love of Lord Rama and Krishna.

Bhakta Beniji exhorted people to surrender mind and body to Lord Krishna. Yea one

should be ever awake (to God) and abideth in the void. And discipline the five sense organs. And his body and mind to Krishna, the God.¹⁹

Kabir - the disciple of Ramanand, was equally affected by Muslim sufi transcendentalism and vedant. At times he would condemn the Hindu gods to establish the superiority of the Lord whose incarnations they were supposed to be :-

Soiled is Brahms, soiled is Indra, And neither the sun is without soil, nor the moon, Yea soiled and unclean is the whole world, The immaculate thing is the infinite name (of God)²⁰

The mystery of God had not been revealed to even Shiva, Vishnu, Lakshmi and other gods and goddesses :-

Neither Brahma's sons, Neither Shiva, nor Sheshnaga, knewth the mystry of God. It is in the society of saints that one cherisheth thee, O lord, Neither Hanuman nor Garura, Neither the God of angelic beings, know thy attributes, O God. Neither the four Vedas, nor the Smrities nor the Purans, Neither Vishnu nor Lakshmi knew. (Thy whole content)²¹

Kabir could deviate from His Guru Ramanand but he too had his faith in Rama;

"Utter thou the name of Rama
But talk not of him to the lovers of Maya"²²

Guru Nanak's disavowal of the theory of incarnation is complete and it has in it democratic implications in the sense that in the context of divine transcendentalism it

established the equality of man and concedes to all the potential and the right to establish the direct contact with God. The denial of the theory of incarnation promotes an anti feudal attitude. Belief in all transcending divinity makes it possible for the individuals to have a sense of independence and face squarely all religious and temporal authority - personal and institutionalized. Guru Nanak acknowledged one true God and no intermediaries and Avatars - his mysticism being of the purist variety. His acceptance of the monist view and his acknowledgement of the evolutionist attitude which visualizes material and mundane forms of life ascending higher and transcending the limitation of the material modes of existence gives to his creed gigantic humanist dimensions. His own urge for identification with the Divine is the source of his iconoclastic independence of mind, thought and utterance which is nothing short of the revolutionary in the context of the medieval modes of thought. Such independence of mind, such fearlessness, such disregard of the power of the political tyrants and such a keen awareness of social reality is not found in other thinkers and philosophers of his time.

In complete disregard of adherents to the theory of incarnation he would say :-

Nanak, the fearless absolute lord is one alone,
And myriads of Ramas, before him are nothing,
Myriads too are the tales of Krishna, Yea
various the Thoughts on Veda, Myriads are the
beggars, dancing to the tune, Yea, they of the
market place play their parts in streets. They
sing like Kings and queens and talk rot.
Precious are their ear rings, precious the laces
upon their necks.²³

The deeds attributed to the deities of the Hindu Pantheon do not enhance the glory of God :-

He thy Lord, created the air and established the earth and put water and fire together (in the body). If, He, as Rama, cut off the head of the blind ten headed Ravana, it would not make him any greater (for that), O, how can He be any bigger for overpowering the serpent. Of whose husband is He? O which is his wife. When he prevadeth all through and through? Brahma, born of Lotus, whose companion is the beneficent Vishnu Left on a search of words's end, But he found it not, Yea if He as Krishna, chopped of Kansa's. Now does it make him any the greater (nor that)²⁴

If God is infinite, naturally the totality of His existence cannot be encompassed and the mystery must persist in the domain of the unknown and the inexplicable whose mysteries cannot be grasped by mere men of flesh and blood who are subject to the laws of causation pain and pleasure :-

Yea, so doth one suffer at Lord's court, Rama too wailed for he was banished . And God separated him, from his wife Sita and brother Lakshman. The ten headed Rama cried when he lost his Lanka. Yea, who had carried away Sita in the guise of mendicant.²⁵

Men could not be elevated to the positions of God and worshipped as God, idolised and personified. Without the grace of God Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh are cursed and

afflicted. Afflicted are Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Yea afflicted is the whole world.

Afflicted are the followers of six shastras and they who wear all forms of garbs and faces their will

O how can the vedas or semitic texts be of avail to them when they know not one God.²⁶

It is obvious that Guru Nanak did not acknowledge, much less make them the objects of his devotional songs. Here, in this respect, he was doing something entirely different than the Bhakta poets who were either the worshippers of Lord Rama or Lord Krishna and worshipped the idols of Rama, Krishna, Shiva and Parvati. The worship of idols could not have any place in his system of thinking whereas Namdev, Dhanna, Trilochan, Beni, Mira and others were idol worshippers. Like Kabir, Nanak turned his back on idol worship and condemned it in unequivocal terms, and thus deviated significantly from the Vaishnav and Shaivite schools of Bhakti cult. Idol worship on the part of the Hindus and blind advocacy of the Law on the part of the Muslims were nothing more than manifestation of the hypocritical urge to establish their religious bonafides :

The Hindus praise the lord whose presence and form are infinite, (But to win him) they bathe at holies and make flower offering to the idols and burn perfumed incense before them.²⁷

They read (holy) books and perform prayers and then fight and they worship stock and stones and then like the herons enter into pseudo trance

If, they know the nature of Lord, They would know these deeds and beliefs to be vain.²⁸

The satire on the futility of idol worship in the lines below has a biting intensity :-

Thou in thy house keepest an idol with its attendant Gods. Thou washest it and worship it. Thou offereth it Kungu, sandal and flowers. Thou fallest at its feet and propitiate it to the utmost. Yet it is by continually begging of men, Thou clothest and supportest thyself.²⁹

Guru Nanak's attitude towards religion as compared to other poets of the Bhakti school was definitely radical in essence. It was permeated by a vigour which had allowed no inhibitions. His courage of conviction made it possible for him to leave no incompatibility between thought and expression regardless of socio-religious modes of thinking, beliefs convictions and superstitions. His condemnation of the professional performance of Ras Lila is note worthy :-

The disciples play the music and the gurus dance,
And keeping time with their feet they wave their hands

To the tune of bread, Yea is all, this dance,
And they strike their heads against the ground
Sing Gopis, sing Krishnas
Sing Sitas sing Rama,
The true name is of the Absolute Lord
Whose creation is the whole world.³⁰

His vigorous condemnation of Hindu and Muslim ascetics Sidhs Naths and yogis in face to face encounters with these peddlers of religion speaks volumes for his

courage and confidence and crusading zeal. Religion for him was not a matter of personal meditation in an isolated capsuled spirituals atmosphere uncontaminated by harsh reality of social existence full of dirt and dross of corruption in both domains - temporal and spiritual. The reality and ideality must not be allowed to be separated by a gulf of pragmatic incopatibility or asceticism of ascetic of ritualistic or devotional variety. Religions and its ethical values do provide a framework of judgement to evaluate social norms of behaviour and suggest positive improvements. In the personality of the thinker of the middle Ages we find a capacity for deeply devotional transcendental mysticism and an acute awareness of the mundane reality from which in spite of his other-worldliness he did not seek a mystic escape. The other Bhakt poets were so deeply absorbed in their devotional transcendentalism that they could hardly come back to the world of action. Their devotional transcendentalism could not have radical repercussion whereas the inherent radicalism in the thought pattern of Guru Nanak evolved into powerful Sikh dynamism under the stewardship of the subsequent apostles of Guru Nanak.

The attitude of the Bhakta poets to the question of caste illustrates the above point of view :

Almost all the Bhakta poets belonged to the socially inferior classes of the Hindu social system. The members of these classes were not supposed to do anything with spiritual pre-occupations. The poets of the Bhakti cult were naturally conscious of their social inferiority. But instead of understanding its implications in terms of social injustice they individually craved for social acceptability by rising in social esteem through their devotion to shaive

and Vaishnav gods. By establishing their claim as men of religion and by demonstrating their devotion to the gods worshipped by the so called higher classes, they were able to gate-crash the citadels of religious bigotry and obstinacy—Gradually and grudgingly they were accepted as saviours :- as men of God who had washed away the stigma of their low birth and inferior social status through the Grace of God. But this acceptance of the saints was not universal and even after achieving the heights of excellence they had to face organised oppressive opposition. I feel perhaps a reason for this partial acceptance might have been actuated by sub-conscious realisation of their utility. They strengthened the survival mechanisms of Hindu social system making it possible for the untouchables and the low caste people to remain in the Hindu fold inspite of allurement held by Islam which promised them instant respectability through conversion which would at once equate them with the Muslim rulers.

The typical Bhakta attitude to the caste problem is revealed in these lines by the less prolific by the less prolific and less known of Bhakta poets/Dhanna :-

To the Lord, the sustainer of earth, was
 Namdev's mind attuned. And Lo, he, the calico
 printer of little worth became worthy, Giving
 up his spinning and weaving, Kabir cherished
 the Love of Lord's feet. And he the weaver of
 low birht, became the treasure of virtue.
 Ravidas the cobbler, who carted the dead
 animals abandoned the Love of Maya

And he became renowned through the companionship
 of saints and saw the vision of Lord. Saina the Barber,



who was engaged in doing odd little things became known the world over, When cherished the transcendent Lord in his mind and was acknowledged among the devotees of the Lord.³¹

Dhanna was clearly aware of the inferior social status of the Bhakta poets and how they could transcend it through meditation on God. Religion here acts as the agent of social elevation at the individual level. It must however be clearly understood, that acceptance of the low caste saints as the saviours of Hindu society did not mean any appreciable relaxation in the rigid rules responsible for the low position of the classes to which these saints belonged. All the same these saints, subconsciously, felt satisfied with this partial acceptability which bred indifference among to their real social position. The Bhakta poet Namdev has given expression to this attitude of indifference :-

'What have I to do with distinctions of caste
For I but cherish the name of Lord'³²

The sense of smug respectability is reflected in the verses of Ravidas who felt honoured on being accepted as religious leader by Brahamans - the arbiters of the social and spiritual worth of man :-

There is an under current of passivity in this attitude. There is hardly an opposition to the hypocritical validity of caste system.

'The men of my caste still cart the dead
animals in the outskirts of Banaras. But I am
being bowed to even by Brahmins, for I have
sought refuge in Lord's name'³³

In the utterances of Kabir also we find the same consciousness of having risen above caste :-

Everyone laughs at my low caste But Lo,
dedicated am I to the caste in which
contemplates my creator Lord.³⁴

He could of course say :-

Thy God is neither in caste, nor in no caste,
And he is attained only by repairing to Guru's
refuge.³⁵

He would talk bitterly about the Brahmins and
condemn them :-

Kabir the tenement is of wood, and all burnt
off, the innocents by good fortune are saved.³⁶

But while talking of his spiritual attainment he
would compare himself with Brahmins :-

Thou art a Brahmin, I am but a weaver from Kashi
But has thou capacity to divine my wisdom.³⁷

He too thought that he had risen above caste
through his company with the saints :-

Sayeth Kabir, 'Listen O, my mother,
Seest thou not that these shaven heads have made
me lose my caste'³⁸

An analysis of Kabir's verses regarding caste, clearly
shows that he was aware of the low social status of his
caste people. He was also aware of the social spiritual
superiority of Brahmins and thought that he had risen
even above them by virtue of his devotion to God.

Guru Nanak's condemnation of caste is complete and unqualified. He is not convinced of the rational validity of caste system from the spiritual or the social organisation point of view. He has repeatedly stressed the equality of men before God :-

Caste are folly
Names are folly
All creatures have one shelter, that of God.³⁹

A man he said should be judged not by his birth but by his worth; See thou of each the light within and ask not his caste for hereafter the caste is of no avail⁴⁰

Caste is not the basis of God's judgment :-

High or low caste influenceth not God when he maketh any great.⁴¹

Guru Nanak had no desire for becoming acceptable to Brahmins. Nor did he find any egoistic satisfaction in the thought that he had humbled them and risen above them in the spiritual domain. His participation in the perpetual and endless debate raging in the minds of Brahmin scholars Sidhs Naths, Jogis and Sufi Darveshes and his display of intellectual superiority and superior rationality did not give him the feelings that he was equal to or higher than the Brahmins because even unconsciously he did not believe in the legend of their spiritual superiority. This implies unique equipoise and objectivity which suggests that his work is not the outcome of a merely mystic trance and ecstatic exultation but of conscious systematic debating and reasoning.

In his work we come across a crusading condemnation of the ruling classes of the spiritual and

temporal world. But this condemnation is not motivated by a sense of inverted inferiority or superiority but a desire to expose the hypocritical legend of Brahman superiority which dominated the medieval mind. In his criticism of the hypocritical oppressors of the people the Guru was Unsparring :-

The man eaters say the five prayers, And
they who wield the knife wear the sacred
thread. And in their homes, do the Brahmins
blow the conch, Yea, they relieve the same
thirsts. False is their stock, yea, false their
trade, And through false hood, fill their bellies
they⁴²

The hypocrisy of the Brahmins practising
untouchability condemning Muslims as Malechas, and at
the same time collaborating with them is mercilessly
exposed :

They seek approval of Muslim rulers by wearing
blue, And worship to Puranas by the barbarians's food,
And eat they the goat over which is breathed the foreign
word, And allow they no one to enter the kitchen.⁴³

By surrounding their food habits with an aura of
sanctity and purity the Brahmins have been perpetuating
the myth of their exclusive spiritual powers. But the Guru
could see through the false hypocritical superiority of the
superstition - ridden Brahmins whose formalism regarding
the wearing of the sacred thread had made the priestly
classes the manifestation of the absurdity and hypocrisy :

Himself the Brahmin goeth (into the yond)
without thread

And twisting it puts it upon others,
 And taking wages he marries of his wards
 And reading their horoscopes, showeth the way
 to all
 Hear ye people and see the wonder of wonders
 His mind is blind and his name is wisdom.⁴⁴

The same theme of priestly treachery and collaboration is developed in the following verses :

They tax the cow and Brahmin and with the
 cow dung they hope themselves to save. They
 wear the Dhoti, the Saffron mark and rosary,
 eat the barbarian's food. Within they worship
 the (idols) Outsides they read the Quran and
 observe the code of Turks.⁴⁵

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BOOK REVIEWS

Lochan Singh Buxi - Saint Poets of Guru Granth Sahib — National Book Shop - Chandni Chowk, Delhi-110006. pp 202, price Rs. 500/-

Bhakti movement is a very important part of the Indian spiritual tradition. It has affected the minds of the masses as well as the elite even at the earliest stages of religious development. In the south the saint poets helped in the assimilation of diverse influences, gave it the people (specially the politically and socially deprived people) a sense of identity and made it possible for them to work out the process of spiritual reconciliation with the dominant culture of the Brahmins who wanted to monopolise all knowledge.

The Bhakta poets of the North gave grass roots protection to the Indian tradition which was facing a very tough challenge from alien influences and at same time undermined the Brahminical influence. The Bhakta poets spiritually rejuvenate the Indian people.

The Bhakti movement was spear-headed in Panjab by the Sikh movement. But the Sikh movement was not a mere extension of the Bhakti cult. It was much more. It had its own spiritual nuances and dynamism.

Lochan Singh Buxi's scholarly treatise deals in detail with the rise of the Bhakti movement right from its beginning in the south. I have yet to come across such a learned but laid account of the philosophical-theological dimensions of the Bhakti movement. Of, course he is mainly concerned with the Saint poets of Guru Granth Sahib. He has very clearly brought out the universalist

nature of the Adi Granth which gave a place of honour to the saint poets whose utterances are placed side by side of the Bani of the Gurus.

The Bani of the Saint poets who belonged to different sections of society and had faith in different religious. Of the 5894 hymns of the Adi Granth 937 hymns are by the Bhakta poets. Obviously we cannot understand in depth, the Bani of the Adi-Granth without understanding the Bhakti Movement.

Lochan Singh Buxi's book will be of immense help to the students of the Sikh scripture. It is remarkable that Lochan Singh Buxi even at this advanced age (He was born in 1923) is capable of producing such a critically sound treatise on the Bhakti movement.

— *Surjit Singh Chawla*

* * * * *

**Parchhaven - (A Collection of Poems) - Surjit
Singh Chawla Harmony Publishing House,
Gurgaon, Haryana**

It is rather remarkable that Surjit Singh Chawla who is above 65 years of age has come up with a collection, of poe most of which were written in the 65th year of life. Poetry is generally considered to be a product of youth and exuberance and the passions and obsessions, frustrations of the young.

Surjit Singh writes mostly about the philosophy of human life, the quest for truth, the illusions and delusions of human life.

Plato's perception of human capacity for truth is the theme of his opening poem 'parchhaven' and speaks of the human incapacity to grasp the truth in its entirety

ki kanchan ki kach
 ki juth ki such
 such noon kaun samajh sakya hai
 Prarchhaven hi disde ne.

(What is gold and what is glass? What is true and what is false? None can apprehend the truth. We see only images only).

Poetry and maturity move hand-in-hand in his poems. He underseands the subtle nuanas of human mind:

Har ik de hisse wich nahin sahib,
 Apne he bojh thalle sabh lok dabe jande ne

It is not everyone who is blessed to carry the cross. People are crushed by the burden of their own existence.

Prof. Chawla does not write only about the predicaments of human life. He also deals with the psychic maladives which have gripped the human mind in this age of consumerism what Surjit Singh writes is not the poetry of old age but it is not meant for the old people only. In a way, Chawla has tried to combine deep emotions with deep thoughts and sentiment with sense. He seems to proclaim that poetry is not yet bankshed from human life.

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